Carnegie-Mellon University

HUNT LIBRARY

PRESENTED BY

Hunt Botanical Library

Hallinell 11/59

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2023 with funding from
Kahle/Austin Foundation

https://archive.org/details/volumeionlyanato0000holb

This the First Edition of *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* is limited to 1000 copies numbered 1–1000, and 48 special copies signed by the Author and printed on J. Barcham Green's hand-made paper numbered I to XLVIII

This is number 449

THE ANATOMY OF BIBLIOMANIA

THE ANATOMY OF BIBLIOMANIA

BY HOLBROOK JACKSON

IN TWO VOLUMES

I

LONDON
THE SONCINO PRESS
1930

Printed in England at
The Curwen Press, Plaistow, E.13

510
J122
v.1

CONTENTS

The Author to the Reader *page* 1

PART I OF BOOKS IN GENERAL

I Of Books and their most Excellent Qualities 21
II The Praise of Books 22
III A Catalogue of Fond Similitudes 24
IV Of Book-Reverence 26
V Of Biblianthropomorphism 27
VI Microcosms that Outlive Monuments 29
VII They are God-like and Immortal 31
VIII The Bibliomania or Madness they Engender 33
IX Of the Parts next to be Set Out 34

PART II OF THEIR MORPHOLOGY AND DIMENSIONS

I A Glance at their Anatomy 37
II Of Size and Convenience 39
III Of Literary Dimensions 43

PART III THE PLEASURE OF BOOKS

I Of Reading for its Own Sake 49
II Pleasure a Condition both Profitable and Honest 51
III Delight that Varies with Time and Place 54
IV Poverty no Hindrance, Riches no Help 56
V Treasuries of Happiness never Exhausted 58
VI The Golden Rule for Readers 61

PART IV THE ART OF READING

I Aesthetical Considerations 65
II Methods of Famous Bookmen 68
III Whether to Read Quickly or Slowly 72
IV Of Assimilation 76
V A Digression of Reading Aloud 79

MAY 29 '73

HUNT LIBRARY
CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY

PART V OF BOOKFELLOWSHIP

I They are the Best Company *page* 91
II Conversing with Books 95
III Friends that Change not yet are ever New 96

PART VI OF THE READING OF BOOKS

I Reading with Purpose 103
II Books Morally Approached 104
III Of Ephemeral and Shallow Works 107
IV Against Idle and Desultory Reading 113
V Vain and Pedantic Reading Condemned 118
VI Old *v.* New Books 122
VII Substitutes for Life 129

PART VII STUDY AND BOOK-LEARNING

I The Fascination of Study 135
II What Seek these Studious Ones? 138
III Studies and Old Age 143
IV A Digression of Capacious Memories 145
V Of Letter Ferrets and Book Sots 148
VI A Cure for Pedantry 150

PART VIII OF THE USES OF BOOKS

I Some Adventitious Uses 155
II Books as Furniture 158
III A Digression of Dummy Books 161
IV Their Use as Tools, etc. 164
V Their Belligerent Usefulness 166
VI Charms, Amulets and Fortune-Tellers 168
VII How Pantagruel Explores the Sortes Virgilianae 176
VIII Of the Sortes in Ancient and Modern Times 179

PART IX OF THE BIBLIOPHAGI OR BOOK-EATERS

I A Diet of Books Considered *page* 187
II Varieties of Book-Eaters 192
III The Physiology of Book-Eating: Gourmets *v.* Gourmands 196
IV A Dissertation upon Appetite 201
V Of Cuisine 203
VI Dishes and Tastes Particularised 207

PART X OF BOOK-DRINKERS

I Of their Liquefaction and Propensities Proper to Drinking 213
II They Raise and Quench Thirst and are Potent Beverages 215
III Bibliobibacity with a Digression of Ecstasy 218

PART XI A PAGEANT OF BOOKMEN

I Bookfolk Defined 227
II Montaigne and Petrarch as Types of Good Bookmen 229
III Various Tastes Outlined 230
IV Of Biblia a-Biblia 237
V Books Preferred above all Things 244
VI The Genesis of Bookmen 248
VII Readers who never Weary 259
VIII Single Book Devotees 264
IX Reading many Books at Once 269
X Preferences no Bar to Further Adventures 270
XI In the Garden of Epicurus 274
XII The Twilight of the Bibliophile 283

PART XII HOW BOOKMEN CONQUER TIME AND PLACE

I The Proper Time for Reading *page* 289
II Of Reading Places 294
III The Association of Book and Place 299
IV Various Readers and their Reading Places 301
V Books on Battlefields 309
VI Books in Prison 311
VII Reading on a Journey 315
VIII Reading at the Toilet 321
IX Reading at Mealtimes 322
X Reading in Bed 325

PART XIII THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS

I General Influences Considered 333
II The Might of Words 340
III Liberating the Soul of Man 344
IV How they Teach the Art of Living 346
V Where Books have Failed 350
VI A Brief Catalogue of Advantages 353
VII Lachrymae Musarum 355
VIII Consolers and Refuges 358

PART XIV BOOKS PHARMACEUTICALLY DISPOSED

I Their Medicinal Properties Generally Considered 361
II Preservatives and Prophylactics 364
III The Claim that they are Cure-alls Discussed 367
IV Range of their Medicinal Properties 372
V A Diversity of Cures 375
VI The Cure of Megrims, Melancholy and like Distempers 378
VII Specific for Tedium Vitae 382
VIII Books as Soporifics 384

PART XV THE ORIGIN OF A SPECIES

I Transmutation *page* 387
II How Books have Made and Changed Character 390
III The Power of the Poet 398
IV Life Imitates Letters 404
V Men who become Books: Biblianthropus Defined 409

THE ANATOMY OF BIBLIOMANIA

THE AUTHOR TO THE READER

Gentle Reader, I presume thou wilt be very inquisitive to know what antic or personate actor it is that so insolently intrudes upon this common theatre to the world's view, arrogating, as you will soon find, another man's style and method: whence he is, why he does it, and what he has to say. 'Tis a proper attitude, and the questions clear and reasonable in themselves, but I owe thee no answer, for if the contents please thee, 'tis well; if they be useful, 'tis an added value; if neither, pass on, nor, in the observation of that wise Glanvill,[1] *hath any one need to complain, since no one is concerned about what another Prints, further than himself pleaseth; and since Men have the liberty to read our Books, or not,* they should give us leave to write what we like, *or forbear*, which for the most part they do.

Yet in some sort to give thee satisfaction, which thou hast a right to demand, since I have caused my book to be printed and sold for money, I will show a reason both of this usurped title and style. And first for the name and form, which I have so freely adapted from Robert Burton his *Anatomy of Melancholy:* lest any man by reason of it should be deceived, expecting a pasquil, a scherzo, a burlesque, a satire, some humorous or fantastic treatise (as I myself should have done, recalling that all parodies are jests), I may at once undeceive him, for my intent is serious; I have gleaned the crops of innumerable authorities scattered far and wide, winnowing the chaff from the grain, and setting out the various species in such an order that they may best contribute to our knowledge of books in general and of *Bibliomania* in particular.

But should my treatise be deemed to have missed its mark as a piece of science, I am content that it should have its niche

[1] *Essays.* (1676.) Preface.

as a pastiche, for then it cannot be other than an entertainment, an extravangaza, a *Revue des Livres* with all the stars in the cast, and a libretto sparkling with an infinite variety of wit and wisdom, sense and nonsense, in prose and verse, epigram, aphorism, tale, apophthegm, anecdote, history, etc.; sometimes authoritative, sometimes speculative; spiced with whims, paradoxes, fancies, facts, the whole tending towards a harmony, which is mine own gift to this Pageant of Books for Bookmen.

Books and the Man I sing:[1]

and since thou, Gentle Reader, art *ad unguem factus homo*, a polished man, of that bookish kind, for none but bookmen will understand, still less enjoy this assemblage, 'tis in part of thee. Thou thyself art the subject of my discourse; and I desire leave to inform you that shall become my readers, that I write not these things unto you because you know them not, but because you know them.

> Quicquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,
> Gaudia, discursus, nostri farrago libelli est.[2]
>
> What *Bookmen* do, vows, fears, in ire, in sport,
> Joys, wand'rings, are the sum of my report.

Thus my title and form become plain, for this treatise is an *Anatomy* of its subject: a fair analysis of books and their meaning for all kinds of men and women, with a particular relation of the madness engendered by them and for them in those extreme cases which I have explicated. My first purpose was to expound only this last, but in doing so I have wandered many times from my main theme in order that a true relation between sanity and dotage should be made clear; wherein I now find that I have incorporated as much of the one matter as of the other; so that if the centre or core of my dissertation remains *Bibliomania*, its environs extend far beyond it, as towns grow from a single citadel, institution or workshop, into a county, but remain towns. Examine the rest, therefore, in like sort, and you shall find a true picture of a book and all its relations and purposes: its joys, advantages, infirmities and offences.

[1] Pope, *Dunciad*. (First Ed.) 1. [2] Juvenal, *Satires*. I, 85–6.

But in the meantime, how does Burton concern me, or upon what reference do I usurp his style? I confess, indeed, that to compare myself unto him for aught I have yet said, were both impudency and arrogancy. I do not presume to make any parallel between my work and his, for what I have accomplished should be plain, even to the hurried passer-by, and if, posing myself deliberately as God posed him, I look awkward, ridiculous, strange, the fault is mine not his, which is too evident to need proof. And since I must not be overconfident of my own performance after him, it will be prudence in me to be silent, and let my treatise tell its own tale.

Yet I hope I may affirm, and without vanity or brag in any sort, that by acknowledging Burton my master, and by imitating him, I have excelled myself; and further, again as I hope without any suspicion of pride or self-conceit, that although I had not his advantage of a University life *as long almost*, he saith,[1] *as Xenocrates in Athens, ad senectam ferè*,[2] penned up most part in his study, *ego in Arcadia vixi*, I have yet lived a silent, solitary, private life, *mihi Musis*, to myself and books, in the busy world. For I have been brought up a student in the university of affairs, the modern city, as he was in *the most flourishing College of Europe*.[3] What he found concentrated in those rich warehouses of wisdom, the Bodleian and the Library of his own college, I have found dispersed in many places; and if he can brag with Jovius almost, *in ea luce domicilii Vaticani, totius orbis celeberrimi, per* 37 *annos multa opportunaque didici*;[4] for forty years and more I have had the use of as good libraries as ever he had; and at all times I have had books of my own, with no memory even of a time when I was bookless, for I am come from a bookloving tribe, and, like Mr. Lear,

> *I live* in a beautiful parlour
> With hundreds of books on the wall;

and I have used my books, perchance, with even greater gusto than Burton used his, for whereas he was a student by condition, I have remained one by waging constant warfare with

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) i, 13. [2] 'To old age almost.' [3] Christ Church in Oxford. [4] Praefat. *hist.*

opposing circumstances: every studious hour a victory over the tryanny of business; and as my *augustissimum collegium* has been books and the world, I would be, therefore, as loth as he was in his more concentrate and more learned amplitude, either by living as a drone to be an unprofitable or unworthy member of so diverse and operose a society, or to write in my hours of freedom that which should be any way dishonourable to such a momentous and manifold foundation.

And if I am so bold as to claim this slender kinship with him, seeming thus to honour myself over much, I am not blind to the differences between us. I frankly confess I am a scholar without scholarship, pursuing learning without attaining it, and kin to him by inclination rather than achievement.

In this light my treatise of *Bibliomania*, insofar as it is Burton *redivivus*, may be taken as an act of homage which I offer to his memory, *ab singulari amore*, as well I may, for constant companionship since first I met with his *Anatomy* nigh forty years ago. Thus in general; but from another point of view, such a work, in such a form, is as much of me as his of him.

Something I have done out of a running wit, *turbine raptus ingenii*,[1] product, as Burton confesses of himself, *of an unconstant unsettled mind;*[2] though in that both he and I are unjust to ourselves (*si parva licet componere magnis*), for inconstancy could never have sired his treatise, or mine. Put case that we are observers, lookers-on, *transmitters of ideas*,[3] commentators of the passing show, not actors in it, or playwrights; we create nothing, but allow everything to create a lively interest in the cosmos of ourselves, a curious courage before the *convictions of others*,[4] not taking our own too seriously, but willing

[1] Scaliger. [2] *Anat. of Melan.* i, 14. [3] Sir William Osler divided writers into Transmitters, Transmuters and Creators: 'In the days when Sir Thomas Bodley concluded to set up his staff at the Library door at Oxford, there lived in this country the last of the great transmitters, Robert Burton; the first of the great modern transmuters, Francis Bacon; and the greatest of the world's creators, William Shakespeare.' *Proceedings*. Oxford Bibliographical Society. v. i. pt. 3. p. 216. [4] Whistler, *Gentle Art of Making Enemies*.

enough to tilt in a joust with those who throw down the gage for the fun of it. Our patron saint is Democritus, as he frankly owned, and our final comment, a laugh, however we may set it forth with words; and I see a parable in this story of Democritus:[1] how he retired to Abdera, a town in Thrace, where he lived at last in a garden in the suburbs, wholly betaking himself to his studies, and a private life, saving that sometimes he would walk down to the haven, and laugh heartily at such variety of ridiculous objects which there he saw.

Such a one was Robert Burton, and he emulated his master both in what he wrote and what he did, for he would walk down to Folly Bridge at Oxford to recreate himself with laughter at what he saw and heard, and I, in our own time, have abundant opportunity to recreate myself with laughter when I taxi down to London Bridge or Piccadilly or the Strand, or such other notable gathering-places of people as my greater freedom of movement affords me; for *what is all this Life but a kind of Comedy, wherein men walk up and down in one another's Disguises, and Act their respective Parts, till the property-man brings 'em back to the Tyring House.*[2] But I am not always laughing, any more than they were: I sometimes rail with Carlyle, satirically tax with Shaw, lament with Schopenhauer, sometimes again *sum petulanti splene cachinno*,[3] and then again, *jecur urere bilis*,[4] I am much moved to see the abuse which I cannot mend. Our artistry is thus in an attitude, and if, in the main, it is like to die with us, but this not certain, it entertains us, and others perchance, while it lasts.

I am not ignorant that I might, as one friend (a notable poet and stiff-necked critic of himself as well as others) advised, have sorted out and co-ordinated my store of *analecta* on some plan more to the purpose of our own age and, indeed, more particular to myself. It was sage advice, *necessitati qui se accommodat, sapit*,[5] and I was, and am, so much

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* i, 13. [2] Erasmus, *Praise of Folly*. Trans. Wilson. Clarendon Press Ed. 53. [3] 'I am a laugher with wanton spleen.' *Persius*. i, 12. [4] 'Gall burns my liver.' Horace, *Sat.* i, 9, 66. [5] Epictetus, *Morals*. c. 18. 'He is wise that suits himself to the time.'

enamoured of the tenent that each and every age should express itself in its own way, and not in that of the past, however excellent, for *composition is not there, it is going to be there and we are here*,[1] that I seriously gave my mind to the problem of re-casting the whole business; but it fell out otherwise, for I then discovered, what I should have known if I had given thought to the origin of my enterprise, that there is no modern method of literary mosaic. The art was perfected by Robert Burton and he remains its unapproachable master. Many have larded their lean books with the fat of his masterpiece, but he has had no imitator till now, save Charles Lamb in an experiment which was never meant to be more than a fragment.[2] From this it may be argued still more stiffly that a literary form which has found no copiers in over three centuries must needs be out-moded, defunct, a wash-out. To this so specious an objection I have this to answer, that it would have been such had it been no more than a patchwork, a show or pattern of words and phrases, but the *Anatomy of Melancholy* is far more than that; and as a great part of this discourse is grounded upon the *Anatomy* I hold myself obliged to a short account of that supposal.

Robert Burton's ingenious treatise is a curiously wrought-out design. There are idle students and cavillers, who have advertised Burton as the creator of a curious anthologic maze, an amusing literary chaos, a farrago of quotations, a mere *olla podrida* of quaintness, a *pot pourri* of pleasant *delites*, a *florilegium* of elegant extracts, a tangled fardel of old-world flowers of thought, a faggot of odd fancies, quips, *facetiæ*, loosely tied, the creator, in short, of a book for a rainy day and a cosy corner. And I will not deny that he has made for the curious and more bookish of readers our greatest work in this kind. But particularly I say it was not his aim to be an entertainment, though he diligently sought to avoid being tedious. Burton wrote as a psychologist and a philosopher: inlaying to those ends his *tesseræ* of borrowed apophthegms and notions. He was so bold as to dispose himself scientifically

[1] Gertrude Stein, *Composition as Explanation*. 16. [2] Lamb, 'Curious Fragments', *Miscellaneous Prose*.

without other authority or qualification than inclination, at the dawn of our era of deduction from observed phenomena, and although it was his disposition to admire and consider strange rather than common things, and to set too great a store upon the unfolding of learned and curious opinions, he sought to make his book as scientifical as Dr. William Harvey made his *De Motu Cordis* or Sir Isaac Newton his *Principia;* or, for the matter of that, and to come nearer home, as Charles Darwin the *Origin of Species;* and as philosophical as such notable works of our own time as *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* or the *Évolution Créatrice;* and if he knew no better than to mingle science with philosophy, as I erewhile began to say, it is all for our own good, for in this dereliction of scientific duty he achieved wisdom without dullness, by means of which it comes to pass that his book survives in our affection as well as in our admiration. Yet, and here is an end of this business, for I am come at length to my point, he is a precursor not so much of these exact works as of those of such conspicuous co-ordinators of anthropological ideas and phenomena as Keane and Frazer, Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis.

In these anticipations I am much in concert with him, and were I equally sympathetic with their style I should have preferred it to his, but since it was otherwise and I more enamoured of my Burton as a writer, and finding my subject of bibliomania amenable to his method, with an affinity to its leisureliness and copious garrulity, I was therefore bold to imitate, to revive again, prosecute and finish, in this treatise. And for reasons which will become plain, if they are not so already, I found in the ample form and slow measure of his diction (which goes trippingly enough on occasion) a refuge from the dirt-track of civilization,

Safe in the hallowed quiets of the past.[1]

A large still book is a piece of quietness, succulent and nourishing in a noisy world, which I approach and imbibe with *a sort of greedy enjoyment,* as Marcel Proust those rooms of his old home whose air was *saturated with the bouquet of silence.*[2]

[1] J. R. Lowell, 'The Cathedral'. [2] *Swann's Way.* Trans. Scott Moncrieff. i, 65.

From this enjoyment of so wide a calmness I found an inclination to reproduce it, and proceeded more by instinct than design, as though sauntering into a domain of unexplored tranquillity, wherein *I beheld the bright countenance of truth in the quiet and still air of delightful studies,*[1] and began, for gladness, to extend its bounds. This ancient manner, with its undulations and digressions, its dingles and coppices of verbiage, its elegant parterres of selected prose and verse, its sharp contrasts of grassy plots and arid places, is not, I am well aware, the fashion of these times when all men hurry and many torture us with noises which disrupt our thoughts and interrupt our lives.[2] I have taken pains to make it slow and long (against my custom), and the manner of it is often so tedious that it is apt to please only those who *study to be quiet*[3]—but that may be accounted a prime virtue in these times; for the rest I keep in the common path, aiming at neither simplicity nor subtlety. I saunter along, loitering when and where I will, taking my time, *I lean and loafe at my ease observing a spear of summer grass;*[4] there is no hurry (*Haste not, be at rest, this Now is eternity.*);[5] there is time to rest if we wish it, no good to be always rushing about. I like to do nothing, to escape from purpose: to brood, to think back and forth; *to sit by a fire in Winter, or in a garden in Summer; to loaf on a sea-beach with the sun on me; to hang over the wall of a pier-head watching the waves in their green and white tantrums; to sit in a brasserie on a Parisian boulevard with a common bock, and the people moving to and fro; to idle in parks or public squares, or in the quadrangles and closes of colleges, or the Inns of Court, or the great cathedrals; to forget haste and effort in old empty churches, or drowsy taverns; to rest by a roadside hedge, or in a churchyard where sheep browse; to lie in a punt*

[1] Milton, *Reason for Church Government.* Intro. ii. [2] 'Noise is the most impertinent of all forms of interruption. It is not only an interruption, but a disruption of thought. Of course, where there is nothing to interrupt, noise will not be so particularly painful.' Schopenhauer, 'On Noise', *Studies in Pessimism.* Trans. Saunders. 128. [3] 1. *Thess.* iv, 11. [4] Walt Whitman, 'Song of Myself', *Leaves of Grass.* 1. [5] Richard Jefferies, *The Story of My Heart.* (1898.) 45.

in the green shade of the willows; to sit on a fence—these things please me well:[1]

> A poor life this if, full of care,
> We have no time to stand and stare.[2]

So it is done, and as it cannot be helped or amended, make the best of it. I descend, then, to the second prejudice, which may have been formed in behalf of the objectors.

You have had a reason for the manner. If any man except against the matter, and will demand a reason of it, I can allege more than one. I writ of bibliomania, by being busy to avoid bibliomania. There is no greater cause of bibliomania than bibliophilia inordinately pursued, no better cure than study or adventurous and eventful reading, and, for some, writing, to express and record such experiences, but of this I have discoursed elsewhere. Some have been afflicted with bibliomania through idleness, and for them there is small hope of cure; others, and I count myself among them, from excess of affairs. Many, like asses that wear out their time for provender, are so buried in the minor and immediate tasks of earning a living as to get *confounded promptly and permanently, with the victims of commercial ambition*,[3] whence it comes to pass that, slily and insensibly perverted, nerves frayed and brains dulled, they take to books as sick souls take to drugs. They hoard at first against a time of leisure when they may perchance read, and end by hoarding for the sake of hoarding, thus allying themselves with those dizzards who wallow among possessions which they cannot use, and who die before they have lived. *To husband a favourite claret until the batch turns sour, is not at all an artful stroke of policy; and how much more with a whole cellar.*[4] I writ, therefore, and busied myself in this playing labour, first for mine own advantage, that I might avoid the torpor of business and the atrophy of the sensibilities which is the punishment of those

[1] Holbrook Jackson, *Southward Ho! and Other Essays*. ii, 17. [2] W. H. Davies, 'Leisure', *Collected Poems*. 19. [3] Louise Imogen Guiney, 'The Precept of Peace', *Patrins*. 124. [4] R. L. Stevenson, 'Crabbed Age and Youth', *Virginibus Puerisque*. 94.

who enslave themselves in affairs, and next *otium in utile vertere negotium*, to turn my leisure to good purpose:

> Simul et jucunda et idonea dicere vitae;
> Lectorem delectando simul atque monendo,

at once to say both useful things and pleasant, to assemble these *fond Crotchets of Philosophy*[1] which I have lighted on in the highways and byways of books, so as to please the reader, yet instruct; which if it be granted possible, 'tis sufficient for my defence; and the sum of my argument, whatever else this treatise may contain or mean, is that books are for our enjoyment and that pleasurable reading is the best prophylactic against bibliomania, and a sure solatium for their lovers.

Yea, but you will infer that this is *actum agere*, an unnecessary work, full of vain repetition, the again and again in other words; which I do not deny, for, I confess, *I love to renew a pleasure by relating it;*[2] but since this conceit is so much mine own affair, you may well ask, to what purpose? To which, among other things which might be suggested, I ask what is purpose? Many desirable things have no purpose whatsoever. And yet if it is possible to distribute as well as augment a pleasure by relating it, I am acting to some purpose, for I bequeath to you the freedom of my enjoyment without forcing its acceptance. Next, my work, you think, is superfluous because many excellent bookmen, critics, commentators, bibliographers, etc., have written just volumes and elaborate tracts of this *Bibliomania;* no news here. You may infer, again, that that which I have in great measure is stolen from others. I admit it, *dicitque mihi mea pagina, fur es.*[3] But if the severe doom of Synesius be true, that *it is a greater offence to steal dead men's labours than their clothes*,[4] what shall become of most writers? I hold up my hand at the bar amongst others, including my good master, for, although I have not privily rifled, I am addicted to larceny in this kind, (as I shall anon explain), *habes confitentem reum*, I plead guilty, I am content to be condemned with the rest.

[1] Glanvill, *Witches and Witchcraft.* (1667.) 60. [2] Pliny, *Letters.* Trans. Melmoth. Loeb. Ed. vii, 24. [3] 'And my page says to me, you are a thief.' Martial, i, 54, 12. [4] *Epistles*, 142.

But why, it may still be urged, swell further this welter of repetition, and worse, if all that they say of plagiary be true? And if, indeed, I have done no more than echo and pilfer, *actum est de me*, it is all up with me, I am undone; to which implications 'twere enough to say, *ab abusu ad usum non valet consequentia;*[1] but I have attempted something more particularly, and claim propriety in my method and fair usage. Were it otherwise, it might have been charged against me that I have writ out of an incontinent penmanship, an itching humour, which is common enough in this scribbling age (and most ages, as the authorities agree, are no better), so that oftentimes it falls out (as Robert Burton taxed of old) a new book is no more than *some bauble or toy which idle fellows write, for as idle fellows to read.*[2] I have no wish to row in that galley, though I despise not idleness when I can get it, nor idle reading neither, which hath its place with the rest, *in virtute multi ascensus,*[3] there are degrees in virtue, as in vice.

That there is a vast chaos and confusion of books I have no doubt, and that our eyes ache with reading, our fingers with turning, I do not deny; nor can I deny that I have risked censure by becoming one of the mob of producers. I do not deny it, and I have only this to say for myself, as Burton said of his book,[4] *Omne meum, nihil meum,* 'tis all mine and none mine. As a bee gathers wax and honey out of many flowers, and makes a new bundle of all,

Floriferis ut apes in saltibus omnia libant,[5]

I was ever wont to intermix with mine own work some ornaments from the works of others, and I have laboriously collected this fardel out of divers writers, and like him, *sine injuria,* I have wronged no writers, but given every man his due; and thus citing and quoting mine authors, I am no thief, *sumpsi, non surripui,* I have taken, not stolen; and what Varro[6] speaks of bees, *minimè maleficae quod nullius opus vellicantes faciunt deterius,* that they are not malicious, because they cause no injury to the flowers which they rifle, on the

[1] 'The abuse of anything is no argument against its proper use.' [2] *Anat. of Melan.* i, 21. [3] Cicero. [4] *Anat. of Melan.* i, 22. [5] Lucretius. iii, 11. [6] *De Re Rust.* 3.16.7.

contrary, they give more than they take, I can say of myself; whom have I injured? It would be as untrue to say of me, as Montaigne alleged might have been said of him: *that here I have but gathered a nosegay of strange floures, and have put nothing of mine into it, but the thread to binde them.*[1] The matter is theirs most part and yet mine, and in some instances, especially of bibliomania proper, more mine than theirs, for the best of them are, as the saying is, at sea with that subject. I have tried to bring them safely into port; and if among so many borrowings I have been pleased to filch some, I have disguised and altered them to a new service, as Ragnar Ostberg, if I may compare my small building with his, plundered the architectural notions of all times and wove them into the fabric of that inimitable *pastiche*, the *Stadshus* of Stockholm. So I pick and choose, and *quicquid bene dictum est ab ullo, meum est,*[2] whatever has been well said by anyone is my property; but as nature doth the aliment of our bodies incorporate, digest, assimilate, *concoquo quod hausi*, I dispose of what I take; and such kind of borrowing, as Milton holds, cannot be accounted a plagiary;[3] so if I make them pay tribute, to set out this my *Macaronicon*,

> Yet credit to the Artist will accrue,
> Who in known things still makes th' appearance new;[4]

for, as Goethe holds, and I go some of the way with him, *the best sign of originality lies in taking up a subject and then developing it so fully as to make every one confess that he would hardly have found so much in it.*[5]

The theory, at least, is mine and the choice and arrangement of my collectanea of shreds and patches. I make no excuse: *qui s'excuse, s'accuse;*[6] and if this new farrago in an ancient manner is condemned because there were giants of old in history and bibliography, then I say, with Didacus Stella, *Pygmaei Gigantum humeris impositi plus quam ipsi Gigantes vident,*[7] a dwarf standing on the shoulders of a giant may see

[1] 'Of Phisiognomy', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe, iii, 387. [2] Seneca, *Epistolae*. xvi, 7. [3] *Iconoclasts*. xxiii. [4] W. King, *Art of Cookery*. 61. [5] *Maxims and Reflections*. Trans. Saunders. 153. [6] Gabriel Meurier, *Trésor des Sentences*. 63. n. 2. [7] In *Lucan*. x, 2. Qt. Burton, *Anat. of Melan*. i, 23.

farther than a giant himself: so I may likely *adopt, adapt, improve*, as our Prince of Wales advises, and also, see farther than my predecessors. Were it otherwise, as it may well be, this method is not defenceless, for as Pliny saith, *alienis pedibus ambulamus, alienis oculis agnoscimus, aliena memoria salutamus, aliena opera vivimus*,[1] we walk with the feet of others, see a friend through another's eyes, salute him by another recalling his name, live by the work of others, for, if you believe the relation of that shrewd man, Samuel Butler, *all things which come to much, whether they be books, buildings, pictures, music, or living beings, are suggested by others of their own kind.*[2] This supposal may give a fairer and more probable account of some of my actions.

It is no greater prejudice for me to indite after Burton, than for him after others; and as he hath rescued many a passage from the oblivion of a prosaic environment by giving it a witty setting, so may the dry bones of such of my authorities as have hitherto slumbered in their own limbo, awake to significance, and perchance to distinction (for I wish them no harm), from the new contexts (whether witty or not) and distinguished companions I have given them. Nor, perhaps, ought I to omit this other argument, that I have resolved into my theme many of those clear circumstances of fact, which we find in well-attested and confirmed relations of this kind; and I here avow that I have been scrupulous to observe the rights of mine authorities in full propriety, citing with precision so far as I could, their own words, not only in matter but in form, out of a confessed regard for them, as Favorinus implied when he said: *si ex Platonis oratione verbum aliquod demas mutesve atque id commodatissime facias, de elegantia tamen detraxeris; si ex Lysiae, de sententia;*[3] no altering Plato, however skilfully, without disfiguring his style, nor Lysias without obscuring his sense. I know nothing, therefore, to help me to imagine that I have wronged anyone purposely.

If, then, as Donne feared for his *Biathanatos, in multiplicity of not necessary citations there appear vanity, or ostentation, or*

[1] Pliny, *Hist. Nat.* 29. [2] *Alps and Sanctuaries.* 87. [3] Aulus Gellius, *Noctes Atticae.* ii, 5.

HUNT LIBRARY
CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY

digression, my honesty must make my excuse and compensation. I am not only with Pliny where he says that to choose rather to be taken in a theft than to give every man his due, is *obnoxii animi et infelicis ingenii*,[1] but can say, again with Donne, that *every branch which is excerpted from other authors, and engrafted here, is not written for the reader's faith, but for illustration and comparison.*[2] I solve it thus; and the conclusion from all these premises is, I hope, sufficiently demonstrated. For the rest, *jacta alea est*, the die is cast and you must take it or leave it.

As for those other faults of style, manner as distinct from matter and method, I am exposed to attack on all fronts, and most by comparison: I have missed my mark, fallen short, o'ershot it; out-Burtoned Burton here, vulgarized him there, and diluted him too often; I am barbaric, unscholarly, provincial, amateurish, sentimental, glib, garrulous, what you will; a dealer in tautologies, rhetoric, gusto, purple patches, rhapsodies, clichés, vogue words, *rags gathered together from several dunghills, excrements of authors, toys and fopperies confusedly tumbled out*, as he said of his own book,[3] *without art, invention, judgment, wit, learning, harsh, raw, rude, phantastical, absurd, insolent, indiscreet, ill-composed, indigested, vain, scurrile, idle, dull and dry;* and with him I confess all; few writers are more frequent in this kind of mischief. Thou canst not think worse of my performance than I do myself, for in the first place I have my vision of what it might have been, and in the second, any work in this kind must remain an effort rather than an achievement, and in that alone I am belike overbold in advancing it. But thou canst still say 'tis not worth reading; to which I reply again briefly and yet I hope sufficiently: the choice is thine; and if it is as bad as I have said, I yield it, I desire thee not to waste time in perusing so vain a work, I should be peradventure loth myself to read myself or thee so writing. But such arguers may please to consider that I have precedents; 'tis not the first usurpation

[1] 'A mark of a diseased mind and an ill-starred disposition.' [2] Preface, *Biathanatos*. Nonesuch Ed. *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*. 424. [3] *Anat. of Melan.* i, 24.

of an author's style and method; others have done as much and not always as frankly, but the theme is mine, the whole discourse being a kind of picture of mine own disposition.

Well or ill, I have put myself upon the stage, and I must take all risks. I have laid myself open in this treatise, turned mine inside (or the bookish part of me) outward. I shall be censured, I doubt not, for to say truth with Erasmus, *nihil morosius hominum judiciis*, there's nought so peevish as men's judgements, yet this is some comfort, *ut palata, sic judicia*, our censures are as various as our palates;

> 'Tis with our judgments as our watches—none
> Go just alike, yet each believes his own: [1]

and never were there two opinions in the world alike, no more than two haires, or two graines. Diversity is the most universal quality; [2] and for every thought expressed there are many glosses and interpretations: *Plotinus believes only in philosophers; Fénelon, in saints; Pindar and Byron, in poets.* To the Platonists *all men who are not devoted to their shining abstractions are rats and mice.* Pope and Swift *describe mankind around them as monsters;* Goethe and Schiller *are scarcely more kind.* [3] I could name many more instances, but refrain lest it be thought that I am opposed to critics, when, forsooth, I rejoice in them, and am so entertained an observer of the varieties and inconsistencies of the human mind that, in the language of our own day, I should with grave misgiving contemplate any attempt to rationalise it. I must confess to an eclectic habit of mind. I like my critics assorted, and am fortunate in this respect, for their variety has no end:

> There's some Peculiar in each leaf and grain,
> Some unmarked fibre, or some varying vein: [4]

One likes this, another that; he respects matter, thou art wholly for style; he loves to be amused, entertained, thou to be informed, uplifted; he is for tradition, thou for what is modern; one will draw upon authority, another upon expedient; this one demands what is personal, that one what is

[1] Pope, *Essay on Criticism*. 9–10. [2] Montaigne, 'To My Lady of Duras', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 657. [3] Emerson, *Representative Men*. (1850.) 73. [4] Pope, *Moral Essays*. i, 15–16.

impersonal; and so they go on, *quot homines, tot sententiae;*[1] so many men, so many minds; that which thou condemnest he commends; that which is more pleasing to one is *amaracinum*, most harsh to another; scarce any conveyance so accurately penned by one which another will not find a crack in, or cavil at, and the meanest of them claw and prey upon one another as so many ravenous birds; 'tis *a war of opinions* which *has fallen out among the writers of all ages;*[2] so how shall I make any way through such prickly quiddities, or hope to express myself to each man's humour and conceit, still less, give satisfaction to all? I have not tried: *best leave such things to take their chance*,[3] for everything is desired according to our belief of its excellency: *Where I incline, there I entertaine myselfe, how soever it be, and am caried away by mine owne weight.*[4] I have implied as much several times: *de gustibus non est disputandum.* And when I have spread all my reasons out, it remains, and it must be plain to all perspicacious readers, that this treatise is writ for mine own exercise and satisfaction: *I have made a recreation of a recreation*,[5] to please myself, not in vanity, but as a game is played, and if you like not my game, go play something else, I shall not be offended.

As for the disciples of that *malignant deity called criticism*[6] (whose existence I doubt), I fear neither them that are old and sour, nor those *sucking critics, who would fain be nibbling ere their teeth are come*,[7] and who *mistake their own toy-trumpets for the trombones of fame;*[8] but for those who are with me in this enterprise, kin to me in taste, and who judge not altogether by the measure of popular and customary opinion, I hope I have graduated in their favour by writing not only according to *jus et norma loquendi*,[9] but what is readable, for a readable book is a fair island full of flowers, birds, and trees, whereof we should thank God of His good grace.

[1] Ter. *Phorm.* 454. [2] Dryden, *Dramatic Poesy*, Dedication. [3] Euripides, *Electra.* 379. [4] Montaigne, 'Raymond Sebond', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii, 346. [5] Izaak Walton, *Compleat Angler.* Pref. [6] Swift, *Battle of the Books.* [7] Dryden, Pref., *All for Love.* [8] Schopenhauer, *Art and Literature.* Trans. Saunders. 88. [9] 'The law and correct usage of speech.' Hor. A.P. 72.

Whether I have writ such a book 'tis for my reader to pronounce; but that there are good things in it I am very apt to believe; and, I add out of the apology of Izaak Walton for his treatise of fishing, *that he that likes not the discourse, should like the pictures of the trout and other fish, which I may commend, because they concern not my self;*[1] for *I am a crow who have followed many ploughs;*[2] *a gatherer and disposer of other men's stuffe.*[3] I have trawled the seas of authorship; presumed to put my sickle in other men's corn. I have rifled gardens; picked pockets; dipped my bucket into friendly wells; charged my battery at others' dynamos; gone up and down the world of imagination, which without doubt can do wonderful things and beget strange persuasions; climbed *Parnassus*, roamed round *Helicon*, stared at *Olympus;* looked through

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery lands forlorn;[4]

hobnobbed with bards and philosophers by the proxy of *many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore*,[5] in

> The Muse-discovered World of Islands Fortunate,[6]

and gathered as I went rare thoughts and fine phrases,

> And words more sure and sweet than they,
> Love could not think, truth could not stay.[7]

I have perchance in some instances jumbled up these many good things immethodically, but not always; there is order in my chaos, nor do I beg pardon for those wild parts, for *unless you have chaos within you cannot give birth to a dancing star.*[8] Greater men have failed, how then shall I, that am *vix umbra tanti philosophi*, hope always to please? *No man so absolute*, Erasmus holds,[9] *to satisfy all, except antiquity*, and not, as it is managed in this age, even that. 'Tis the common doom of all writers: I must (I say) abide it; I seek not applause, enough

> If my slight Muse do please these curious days.[10]

[1] *Compleat Angler.* Pref. [2] Bernard Shaw, Pref., *Three Plays for Puritans.* xxxvi. [3] Sir Henry Wotton, Pref., 'Elements of Architecture', *Reliquiae Wottonianae.* 195. [4] Keats, *Ode to a Nightingale.* [5] Poe, *The Raven.* [6] Cowley, *Pindarique Ode.* [7] Crashaw, *Hymn to St. Thomas.* [8] Nietzsche. [9] *Judic. de Sen.* [10] Shakespeare, *Sonnets.* xxxviii.

Yet I am not coy of appreciation neither:

laudatus abunde
Non fastiditus si tibi, lector, ero,[1]

but praise enough if you, gentle reader, do not despise me; greater praise if you enjoy my garden: *a man is really alive only when he delights in the goodwill of others.*[2] So whilst I fear the censure of wise men, and respect their assessment of my labours, I scorn the rest, for it is better that a man is willing to be what he is: *quod sis, esse velis.* What, therefore, I have said, *pro tenuitate mea,*[3] I have said.

One or two things I would yet say in anticipation of legitimate censure. I was desirous to have amended, if I could, concerning the manner of handling this my subject: to have polished and preened more, so that my style, which sometimes flows remissly, would have better mirrored that of my master, but the least said of that the soonest mended. I would also have added many more of those examples, aphorisms, stories, apophthegms, etc., which are still roving free in the ocean of letters, but I was constrained to stop, for there is no end to the testimony of books, and, at best, I could do no more than hope that I had adequately represented my theme in this treatise, even though it be an inadequate gallimaufry, an incomplete and often tangled medley, for *I am a lesse maker of bookes, then of anything else;*[4] hoping that you might buttress my edifice where it is frail, from your own quarry. In brief, and to have done with explanations, I confess it is neither as I would, nor as it should be. I would willingly add much, but 'tis too late. It was not in my power to end so large a subject, for I had done little more than advance upon its outposts when time bid me stop. In the meantime I have gathered enough, and if my argument is not plain, no additions could have made it plainer.

Last of all, and for final *apologia* in so writing, I give my belief that *the proper study of mankind is books,*[5] which was

[1] Ovid, *Trist.* I, 7, 31, 32. [2] Goethe, *Maxims.* Trans. Saunders. 68. [3] 'In my own poor fashion.' [4] Montaigne, 'To my Lady Duras', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii, 654. [5] Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow.* 304.

supported by the learned Dr. Donne when he claimed that *the world is a great volume, and man the Index of that Book.*[1] So, to cut the matter short, I presume of thy good favour, and gracious acceptance (gentle reader), and out of an assured hope and confidence thereof, I will close this prolegomenon, and begin.

[1] *Sermons, Selected Passages.* L. P. Smith. 67.

PART I

OF BOOKS IN GENERAL

I. OF BOOKS AND THEIR MOST EXCELLENT QUALITIES

Books, the most excellent and noble creations of Man, *are*, saith one,[1] *for company, the best Friends; in doubts Counsellours; in Damps Comforters; Time's Prospective, the home Traveller's Ship, or Horse, the busie man's best Recreation, the Opiate of Idle Weariness, the Mindes best Ordinary, Nature's Garden and Seed-plot of Immortality*. He would have that Books are not only *more than riches*, but that they *challenge Pre-eminence above the World's admired fine things:*[2] they are *the Glasse of Counsel to dress ourselves by;* and summing up their benefits he well adds, *Books are Life's best business: vocation to these hath more Emolument coming in, than all the other busy terms of life. They are feeless counsellors, no delaying Patrons, of easy access, and kind expedition, never sending away empty any Client, or Petitioner, nor by delay, making their δῶρα ἄδωρα, Courtesies injurious.*[3]

Achieving, as they do, so much in the economy of life, it is no surprise to learn from Richard de Bury that their origin is divine: *all the glory of the world would be buried in oblivion, unless God had provided mortals with the remedy of books;*[4] and in many other parts of the same dissertation this most notable authority apostrophizes books in terms which outrace praise and exalt them beyond most mortal things, which I shall have occasion to cite. In the meantime let him relate how *they are masters who instruct us without rod or ferule, without angry words, without clothes or money*, and that *if you come to them they are not asleep; if you ask and enquire of them they do not withdraw themselves; they do not chide if you make mistakes; they do not*

[1] Richard Whitlock, *Zootomia*. (1654.) 248. [2] *Ib.* 236. [3] *Ib.* 246. [4] *Philobiblon*. Trans. Thomas. 9.

laugh at you if you are ignorant; they *give to all who ask* and *enfranchise* all who serve them faithfully;[1] *they are the treasured wealth of the world, the fit inheritance of generations and nations,*[2] *necessities of life.*[3]

Since they are of such great value, it is not unreasonable for John Lyly to resolve that it is *far more seemly to have thy Studie full of Bookes, than thy Purse full of money.*[4] All these appraisals I might largely prove in their particular instances (and will somewhat in succeeding parts), but it is not here needful, since those that deny them do so out of prejudice, or ignorance of my theme, or from a frank and honest apprehension that such opinions are absurd, forgetting that *literature is the Humanities,*[5] and, *except a living man nothing more wonderful*[6] than a book; for books are the cosmography of man, a world in themselves, as several credible relations do attest. 'Tis just, therefore,

> That I should here assert their rights, attest
> Their honours, and should, once for all, pronounce
> Their benediction.[7]

II. THE PRAISE OF BOOKS

The praise of books rings through the centuries, each age, nay, each year bodying forth rhapsodists; and such is the candour and integrity of succeeding ages that Thomas Carlyle, nearly five hundred years after Richard de Bury,[8] claims that books are the supreme member of the three most notable *visible and tangible products of the past,*[9] and he marshals his richest harmonies in their favour: *Wondrous indeed is the virtue of a true Book,* not like a dead city of stones, yearly crumbling, *yearly needing repair;* but *more like a tilled field, a spiritual field; a spiritual tree, let* him rather say, standing *from year to year, and*

[1] *Philobiblon.* Trans. Thomas. 9. 11–12. [2] Thoreau, *Walden.* Scott Lib. 101. [3] Theopompus, Qt. *Athenaeus.* Loeb. Ed. ii, 67. [4] *Euphues.* [5] Edward Dowden, *Fragments from Old Letters.* 3. [6] Charles Kingsley. [7] Wordsworth, *Prelude.* v, 216–18. [8] The *Philobiblon* was finished in 1345 though not published until 1473. [9] The other two are cities and tilled fields.

from age to age (we have books that already number some hundred and fifty human ages); and yearly comes its new produce of leaves (Commentaries, Deductions, Philosophical, Political Systems; or were it only Sermons, Pamphlets, Journalistic Essays), every one of which is talismanic and thaumaturgic, for it can persuade men. He exhorts the writer of a real book not to envy *him whom they name City-builder* and *inexpressibly* to *pity him whom they name Conqueror or City-burner! Thou too,* he advises the book-builder, *art a Conqueror and Victor; but of the true sort, namely over the Devil: thou too hast built what will outlast all marble and metal, and be a wonder-bringing City of the mind, a Temple and Seminary, and Prophetic Mount, whereto all kindreds of the earth will pilgrim.*[1]

Not less truly but with even more riot of fancy Richard le Gallienne exalts the glory of books in a dulcet panegyric. They are *nightingales* and *honeycombs, orchards, moonlit woods,* and such-like delicacies and delights: *Books,* he chants, *those miraculous memories of high thoughts and golden moods; those magical shells, tremulous with the secrets of the ocean of life; those love-letters that pass from hand to hand of a thousand lovers that never meet; those honeycombs of dreams; those orchards of knowledge; those still-beating hearts of the noble dead; those mysterious signals that beckon along the darksome pathways of the past; voices through which the myriad lispings of the earth find perfect speech; oracles through which its mysteries call like voices in moonlit woods; prisms of beauty; urns stored with all the sweets of all the summers of time; immortal nightingales that sing for ever to the rose of life.*[2] And there is a saying of a saint that seems to countenance these high modern opinions: *Take thou a book in thine hands,* Thomas à Kempis advises in his *Doctrinale Juvenum,* as *Simon the Just took the Child Jesus into his arms to carry him and kiss him. And when thou hast finished reading, close the book and give thanks for every word out of the mouth of God; because in the Lord's field thou hast found a hidden treasure.*

[1] *Sartor Resartus.* Bk. ii, ch. 8. [2] *Prose Fancies.* (1894.) 114.

III. A CATALOGUE OF FOND SIMILITUDES

To descend more to particulars, they are likened to most of the admired and useful conditions and things known to man: to Guests, *welcome these three books as fellow-guests;*[1] to Companions, *a blessed companion is a book;*[2] Teachers, *it is books that teach us to refine on our pleasures when young, and which, having taught us, enable us to recall them with satisfaction when old;*[3] Masters, *after some whiles meditation,* I walk *up to my masters and companions, my books;*[4] Guides, *books are a guide in youth and an entertainment for age.*[5] Some are Directories *to Heavenly Wisdom;*[6] others Circulars, for *every book is, in an intimate sense, a circular-letter to the friends of him who writes it;*[7] they are Actions, *every great book is an action;*[8] Universities, *the true university of these days is a collection of books;*[9] Talismans and Spells, *books are not seldom talismans and spells;*[10] Proverbs, like them they *receive their highest value from the stamp and esteem of ages through which they have passed;*[11] Prophets, *in books we foresee things to come;*[12] Magicians, *Books, written words, are still miraculous Runes, the latest form!;*[13] Physic, *no mood to which a man may not administer the appropriate medicine at the cost of reaching down a volume from his bookshelf;*[14] Anæsthetics, *books are the blessed chloroform of the mind;*[15] Limbs, *the limbs of scholars;*[16] Windows, *through which the soul looks out,* for a home without them is like *a house without windows;*[17] Lamps, *Blessed be God that hath set up so many clear lamps in His Church;*[18] Flowers, as in the poet:

> But you were all choice flowers; all set and dressed
> By old sage florists, who knew the best;[19]

Riches, *Keep your books and do not despair of my making them*

[1] Cicero. *De Officiis.* iii, 33 (speaking to his son Marcus, of that work.) [2] Douglas Jerrold. [3] Leigh Hunt. [4] Joseph Hall, 'Epistle to Lord Denny'. [5] Jeremy Collier, 'Of the Entertainment of Books.' *Essays.* [6] Richard Whitlock, *Zootomia.* 236. [7] R. L. Stevenson. [8] Martin Luther. [9] Thomas Carlyle, *Heroes.* 262. [10] Cowper, *The Task.* vi. [11] Sir William Temple. [12] Richard de Bury. [13] Carlyle, *Heroes.* 258. [14] Lord Balfour, *Essays and Addresses.* 36. [15] Robert Chambers. [16] Rhodiginus, *Hist. Ludicra.* (1656.) ix, 148. [17] Henry Ward Beecher, *Sermons.* [18] Joseph Hall, *Occasions and Meditations.* [19] Henry Vaughan.

mine some day; if I ever do, I shall be the richest of millionaires, and shan't envy any man his manors and meadows.[1] Treasures, *these fathered treasures of time, the harvest of so many generations;*[2] Mines, *to which the wise man sends his son that he may dig out treasures.*[3] They are Legacies, *which genius leaves to mankind;*[4] Money, *the best viaticum I have yet found out for this human journey;*[5] Estates, *Cowper's 'Task' is as good as an estate to every reading man.*[6] They are also militant: Battles, *a good book may be as great a thing as a battle;*[7] and Engines of War, *the weapons spiritual of the monks, as libraries are the magazines of the Church militant;*[8] *Claustrum sine armario quasi castrum sine armamentario.*[9]

That they are ornaments none will gainsay: ornaments of learning, wisdom, knowledge, art, science, manners, even *genteel ornaments*, as Lord Chesterfield claims;[10] and some writers, abandoning the exalted, descend to the commonplace, comparing them with familiar things such as Furniture, *The Best Furniture*, Richard Whitlock relates in a learned Discourse (*Zootomia*. 236–248), for Solomon *his* Library, *was not the least piece of his Magnificence: Such Furniture thought he necessary, and stately the* Queen of Sheba *thought it;* Sydney Smith well adds, *no furniture so charming as books, even if you never open them or read a single word* (which many support by practice); Couches, *can any couch be more delectable than the Elysian leaves of Books;*[11] Warehouses and Depositories, *good books are the warehouses of ideals*, saith one,[12] whilst another[13] marks them out as *the depository of everything that is most honourable to man.*

Lord Bryce denies that they are *mere vehicles of information*, but calls them rather Engines—*for the stimulation and training of the thinking power.* Others have it that they are ships,

[1] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*. Loeb Ed. i, 4. [2] Robert Southey. [3] Richard de Bury, *Philobiblon*. Trans. Thomas. 12. [4] Charles Gore. [5] Montaigne. [6] Robert Chambers, 'What English Literature Gives Us', *Chambers' Journal*. [7] Benjamin Disraeli. [8] Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages*. 50. [9] 'A monastery without a library is like a castle without an armoury.' *Ib*. From letter of Gaufredi of St. Barbary to Peter Mangot, in Martene, *Thes. Nov. Anecd.* Tom. i, col. 511. [10] *Letters*. [11] Frank Carr. [12] H. G. Wells. [13] William Godwin.

which pass through the vast seas of time;[1] and 'tis no strain upon our credulity to discover in this maritime connection that they are also Lighthouses, *erected in the sea of time.*[2] Sir William Davenant does not hesitate to call them Monuments, *the monuments of vanished minds*, and Horace will have it that the written word is more permanent than brass or stone:

> I've reared a monument, my own,
> More durable than brass;
> Yea, kingly pyramids of stone
> In height it doth surpass.[3]

Their gastronomic virtues have many witnesses; Richard de Bury gives out that they are *wells of living waters, delightful ears of corn, combs of honey, golden pots in which manna is stored,* and *udders of milk;*[4]

> By sucking you, the wise like bees do grow.[5]

Coleridge makes them out to be Fruit-trees, *an excellent book is like a well-chosen and well-tended fruit-tree;*[6] Oliver Wendell Holmes that they are Fruits, especially when first published, *new books are fruits of the world's age;* and Robert Southey says they are *not only the pride of my eye, and the joy of my heart, and the food of my mind,* but *more than metaphorically, meat, drink and clothes for me and mine;*[7] but I shall expound their gastronomy in my section of the *Bibliophagi.*

IV. OF BOOK-REVERENCE

For Charles Lamb, epicure of letters, books were *Spiritual repasts,* and he exclaims in wonderment that we say no grace before them, *a grace before Milton—a grace before Shakespeare—a devotional exercise proper to be said before reading the 'Fairy Queen'.*[8] Not alone was he in this pious wish, for not only did the learned monks of old exercise, as Merryweather observes,[9] the utmost care in the preservation of their *darling*

[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning.* [2] Edwin P. Whipple. [3] Horace, *Odes.* iii, 30. [4] *Philobiblon.* 12. [5] Henry Vaughan. [6] Prospectus to a Course of Lectures. [7] Letter to Bedford. [8] 'Grace before Meat', *Essays of Elia.* [9] *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages.* 17.

books, but they supplicated the blessing of God upon their *goodly tomes* in various exhortations: *O Lord*, saith one, *send the virtue of thy Holy Spirit upon these our books; that cleansing them from all earthly things, by thy holy blessing, they may mercifully enlighten our hearts and give us true understanding; and grant that by thy teaching, they may brightly preserve and make full an abundance of good works according to thy will.*[1] Liu Tsung-Yuan so reverenced the poetry of his friend Han Yu, that, as Giles telleth,[2] he never opened his books without *first washing his hands in rose-water;* and Dibdin is so imbued with book-reverence that he would have illustrious copies ceremoniously transported from one State to another: the Spaniards, he says,[3] *ought to have made a canopy of their swords over* Sir John Tobin's copy of the *Ferdinand and Isabella Missal*, as it left its *native soil.*

V. OF BIBLIANTHROPOMORPHISM

Books are anthropomorphized by many observers; they

> are men of higher stature,
> And the only men that speak aloud for future times to hear;[4]

this is no book, exclaimed Whitman of his *Leaves of Grass*.[5]

> Who touches this touches a man,
> . . . . . .
> It is I you hold and who holds you,
> I spring from the pages into your arms—decease
> calls me forth.
> O how your fingers drowse me,
> Your breath falls around me like dew, your pulse
> lulls the tympans of my ears,
> I feel immerged from head to foot,
> Delicious, enough.

Swift advertises them as *children of the brain*.[6] Nothing made by man is so like unto him: if they are alive, they go on living by a process of reproduction one from the other, they increase

[1] Martene, *de Antiq. Eccl. Ritibus*. ii, 302. [2] *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 255.
[3] *Reminiscences*. ii, 972. [4] E. B. Browning, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship*.
[5] 'So long!' *Leaves of Grass*. 382. [6] *Tale of a Tub*.

and multiply in varying degrees, and bear other resemblances to their creators, as over-production and sterility, youth, age, decay, and death. They suffer the same fate as men, *They share with us*, Joseph Conrad says, *the great incertitude of ignominy or glory—of severe justice and senseless persecution—of calumny and misunderstanding—the shame of undeserved success. Of all the inanimate objects, of all men's creations, books are the nearest to us, for they contain our very thought, our ambitions, our indignations, our illusions, our fidelity to truth, and our persistent leaning towards error. But most of all they resemble us in their precarious hold on life.*[1]

The study of books is no traffic with dead things: the Elzevir classics are *pretty little pets, literary bantams;*[2] Henry Bradshaw gives out that bibliography is *a branch of natural history* and that books have *genera* and *species;*[3] *books are to me*, saith mine author, *living organisms, I can only study them as such.*[4] He studied books, said William Blades, much as *a botanist treats plants or an entomologist insects.*[5] Coleridge has it that a library is *a living world, and every book a man, absolute flesh and blood*, which is miraculous, supporting Victor Hugo in his saying that a book is a miracle itself: *Behold a book. I will nourish with it five thousand souls—a million souls—all humanity. In the action of Christ bringing forth the loaves, there is Gutenberg bringing forth books. One sower heralds the other. . . . Gutenberg is forever the auxiliary of life.*[6] But most will be content with good Dr. Thomas Fuller when, in his *Holy State*, he calls the occupants of his study *a company of honest old fellows in leathern jackets,*[7] knowing well enough that those jackets contain Souls, *the assembled souls of all that men held wise, imprisoned until some one takes them down from a shelf and reads them;*[8] or even Ghosts, *not collections of printed pages;*[9] and we shall agree with Cicero, who held that *a room without books was as a body without a soul.*[10]

[1] *Notes on Life and Letters.* (1921.) 5. [2] J. Hill Burton, *Book-Hunter.* 60. [3] Prothero, *Memoir of Bradshaw.* 365–6. [4] *Ib.* 327. [5] *Ib.* 363. [6] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anth.* 375. [7] Davenant. *Gondibert.* ii.5.37. [8] Samuel Butler, *Note Books.* 95. [9] Alexander Smith, 'Books and Gardens.' *Dreamthorp.* 249. [10] Qt. Lubbock, *Pleasures of Life.* i, 56.

VI. MICROCOSMS THAT OUTLIVE MONUMENTS

Some would have them to be microcosmic, embracing all life: *the making of Shakespeare's mind was like the making of the world.*[1] *Books*, said William Wordsworth, *are a substantial world both pure and good.*[2] Leigh Hunt would have that they are half of the known world: the globe we inhabit being *divisible into two worlds: the common geographical world, and the world of books;* and he holds further, they are *such real things*, that, *if habit and perception make the difference between real and unreal, we may say that we more frequently wake out of common life to them, than out of them to common life.*[3] Stéphane Mallarmé cries that *the world was made for nothing more than to produce a beautiful book*, which some even among good bookmen may account a heresy, and though I adventure to affirm nothing concerning the truth and certainty of this supposition, yet I must needs say, it does not seem to me unreasonable; and there are others also who would attribute to books qualities which might fit them even for so great a destiny. James Thomson upholds them as mediums of *the mighty dead*,[4] bridging eternities; *no past*, says Bulwer Lytton, *so long as books shall live*,[5] and that they do live is thus further supposed by the poet when he records of the books in his room:

> I feel your great hearts throbbing deep in quire,
> And hear your breathing round me in the gloom;[6]

which is again supported by Dean Swift, who felt, when reading a book, whether wise or silly, that it seemed to be *alive* and talking to him.[7] Bronson Alcott, in his *Concord Days*, calls them *living friends*, for they have both *voice and physiognomies, personality and complexion;* and with another poet 'tis not absurd to believe that

[1] William Cory, 'Table Talk' in M. E. Coleridge, *Gathered Leaves*. 323. [2] *Personal Talk*. [3] *Monthly Repository*. Farewell address. (1828.) [4] 'Winter'. *The Seasons*. 431. [5] *The Souls of Books*. [6] Richard Le Gallienne, 'Confessio Amantis', *Volumes in Folio*. 60. [7] 'Thoughts on Various Subjects.'

They are not dead, but full of blood again,
I mean the sense, and every line a vein.[1]

Some claim that they are richer than sentient beings, and *may last as long as the sun and moon and perish only in the general wreck of nature.*[2] Immortality itself is theirs: *Laws die, Books never;*[3]

Not marble, not the gilded monuments
Of princes, shall outlive this powerful rhyme;[4]

the *romance of 'Tom Jones'*, saith Gibbon,[5] *that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the Escurial, and the imperial eagle of the house of Austria;* and no greater testimony to their power of endurance has been paid to them than by our Lord Verulam,[6] who associates the knowledge which is to be found in books with that *immortality or continuance* to which *man's nature doth most aspire*, for *monuments of wit and learning are more durable than the monuments of power or of the hands. Have not the verses of Homer continued twenty-five hundred years, or more, without the loss of a syllable or letter; during which time infinite palaces, temples, castles, cities, have been decayed and demolished? It is not possible*, he argues, *to have the true pictures of Cyrus, Alexander, Caesar, no, nor of the kings or great personages of much later years; for the originals cannot last, and the copies cannot but leese of the life and truth. But the images of men's wits and knowledge remain in books, exempted from the wrong of time and capable of perpetual renovation;* which, Emerson in his *Spiritual Laws* would have, is dependent upon no effort friendly to them or hostile, but upon *their own specific gravity, or the intrinsic importance of their contents to the constant mind of man;*

O blessed letters! that combine in one
All ages past, and make one live with all.[7]

[1] Henry Vaughan, 'On Sir Thomas Bodley's Library'. [2] Addison, *Spectator*. 166. [3] Bulwer Lytton, *Richelieu*. i, 2. [4] Shakespeare, *Sonnets*. lv. [5] *Memoirs*. Ed. Hill. 5. [6] *Advancement of Learning*, Bk. i, fin. [7] Samuel Daniel, *Musophilus*.

VII. THEY ARE GOD-LIKE AND IMMORTAL

If Milton is to be believed, *a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life;*[1] for him a book is even more than that, more than the immortal reflex of man, master or otherwise, a book in this view, *ordinibus deorum*, leaps all worldly similitudes and becomes divine: *who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but, he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself; kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye;* he *slays an immortality rather than a life;*[2] and this most high enthronement is supported by Plato: *books are the immortal sons deifying their sires*, as gods are created in the Poet:

> Where man is met
> The gods will come; or shall I say man's spirit
> Hath operative faculties to mix
> And make his gods at will?[3]

which translates the created into the creator, the gift of God into the maker of Gods. It makes the thing itself more potent than the writer himself, for *how often does the worm-eaten volume outlast the reputation of the worm-eaten author!*[4]

They are harbingers of heaven and evidences of immortality, for great souls live in them,

> I never yet the Living Soul could see,
> But in Thy Books and Thee.[5]

Nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect which bred them.[6] Alexander Smith will have it that books are Heaven itself, *the true Elysian fields where the spirits of the dead converse, and into these fields a mortal may venture unappalled;*[7] and if some there are who cannot support him in this, as may well be, for Heaven is often a matter of taste, they may yet hold that books (some of them) are harbingers of that Kingdom of God which is situate in the cosmography of ourselves, *we carry with us the wonders we*

[1] *Areopagitica.* [2] *Ib.* [3] Robert Bridges, *Achilles in Scyros.* 23, 552–5. [4] Thomas Hood. [5] Cowley, *Pindaric Odes.* 'To Mr. Hobs.' [6] Milton, *Areopagitica.* [7] 'Books and Gardens.' *Dreamthorp.* 249.

seek without us;[1] but whatever their Heaven (and 'tis none of my business), it is their aim to get there sooner or later, and they cannot but rejoice that books are accredited instruments to that end, as acclaimed by so reliable a witness as Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, and High Chancellor of England, in that notable panegyric: *Ye are the tree of life and the fourfold river of Paradise, by which the human mind is nourished, and the thirsty intellect is watered and refreshed. Ye are the ark of Noah and the ladder of Jacob, and the troughs by which the young of those who look therein are coloured; Ye are the stones of testimony and the pitchers holding the lamps of Gideon, the scrip of David, from which the smoothest stones are taken for the slaying of Goliath. Ye are the golden vessels of the temple, the arms of the soldiers of the Church with which to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked, fruitful olives, vines of Engadi, fig-trees that are never barren, burning lamps always to be held in readiness.*[2]

All of which Thqmas de Quincey hath made good in a laudation of Milton in which he claims that *Paradise Lost is not a book among books, not a poem among poems, but a central force amongst forces;* thus those words with which Sir Thomas Browne concludes his *Religio Medici* have a new meaning, for after claiming happiness to be only wherein God Himself and His Angels are happy, *in whose defect the Devils are unhappy,* he proceeds to argue that *whatsoever else the World terms Happiness,* is to him *a story out of Pliny, a tale of Boccace or Malizspini,* which would content many, though for him it be but a *neat delusion,* no marvel that *in the highest civilisation the book is still the highest delight,*[3] or that they beam eternally as beacons upon the sea of time:

> Bright books: the perspectives to our weak sights,
> The clear projections of discerning lights,
> Burning and shining thought, man's posthume day,
> The track of fled souls in their Milky Way,
> The dead alive and busy, the still voice
> Of enlarged spirits, kind Heaven's white decoys![4]

Well may Heinsius exclaim as he enters the library at Leyden,

[1] Browne, *Religio Medici.* xv. [2] *Philobiblon.* Trans. Thomas. 12–13.
[3] Emerson, 'Quotation and Originality', *Letters and Social Aims.* 129.
[4] Henry Vaughan.

before even it was endowed with Scaliger's books: *In the very bosom of Eternity among all these illustrious souls I take my seat.*[1]

As long as we are ruled by wisdom and veneration towards these *Images of God*, regarding them as Angels, for they are of that constitution, which has been supported by the Sage of Concord: *Angels they are to us of entertainment, sympathy, and provocation:*[2] so shall we attain somewhat of their peace and joy, and escape all manner of incurable diseases of the mind which are the just and deserved punishment of our sins of bookish neglect, *for without books God is silent, justice dormant, natural science at a stand, philosophy lame, letters dumb, and all things involved in Cimmerian darkness.*[3] This is a great and evident truth, plainly manifested in all histories, both ancient and modern, thus exalting our reading or traffic with books as ministry or sacrament to *Liber Pater*, after whose image they are made. *Te quoque dignum finge deo.*[4]

VIII. THE BIBLIOMANIA OR MADNESS THEY ENGENDER

That madness should disturb so beneficent a gift is strange, but all the world, according to Burton[5] (and some learned observers as well), is mad or dotes in one or another member of itself: pragmatically mad or logically mad; ego-mad or mad in disposition: deranged, demented, cracked, and therefore stupid, angry, drunken, silly, sottish, sullen, proud, vainglorious, ridiculous, beastly, peevish, jealous, foolish, obstinate, fanatical, impudent, extravagant, grasping, avaricious, dry, doting, dull or desperate; harebrained or obsessed; crazy, frantic, lunatic; if not wholly morons, cretins, which no asylum can hold or physic help. So also with books and book-folk.

My purpose in the following work is to discourse of the

[1] *Great Book-Collectors.* Elton. 180. [2] Emerson. [3] Thomas Bartholin, 'De libris legendis'. *Dissertations.* Copenhagen. (1672.) [4] 'Make thyself worthy of God.' [5] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) i, 137.

nature, excellences, uses and diseases of books, and particularly to anatomize this humour of *Bibliomania*, through all his parts and species, as it is an habit, or a disease; and philosophically and medicinally to show the causes, symptoms, signs, expressions, meanings, manifestations, eccentricities, vanities, impudences, and, where expedient, the cures, for 'tis plain to conceive that it is often a genial mania, less harmful than the sanity of the sane, and most happy when endemic with moderation in the constitution of a man.

In doing so, I have described and opened up, as by a kind of dissection, not only those peccant humours (some of them) which have given impediment to the proficiency of learning and occasion to the traducement of the love of books, but also those more robust passions which are proper to bibliophilia: wherein, if I have been too plain, it must be remembered, *fidelia vulnera amantis, sed dolosa oscula malignantis*:[1] to be true to any subject without frankness is impossible. These methods and motives at this present have induced me to make choice of the subject.

IX. OF THE PARTS NEXT TO BE SET OUT

Yet, before I proceed to discourse farther, I hold it not impertinent to make a brief digression of the body and faculties of books, for the better understanding of what is to follow; because there are many strange words, and strange connotations of unfamiliar words, which of the uninitiated (if any adventure with me in this treatise) will not so easily be perceived, what they are, how cited, and to what end they serve. Besides, it may peradventure give occasion to some men, to examine more accurately, search farther into this excellent subject, and thereupon with that Royal Poet[2] to praise God, for a book, like a man, *is fearfully and wonderfully made, and curiously wrought*, and for such matters as concern the knowledge of these treasures, many are wholly ignorant or careless, they know not what the body and soul of them are,

[1] 'Faithful are the wounds of a lover, but deceitful are the kisses of an enemy.' *Proverbs* xxvii, 6. [2] *Psalms* cxxxix, 14, 15.

how combined, of what parts and faculties they consist, how one book differs from another, in format, character and quality, and how these in turn differ infinitely within themselves, and of their essence. To stir up, therefore, a more exact observation of books, and to give some small taste or notice of the rest, I shall now, for your better understanding, open up the parts with a consideration of their physiology and morphology.

PART II

OF THEIR MORPHOLOGY AND DIMENSIONS

I. A GLANCE AT THEIR ANATOMY

It is not necessary to do more than point at the anatomy of the books themselves, since their physical constituents, except in the matter of form and appearance (and then from the point of view of taste alone), have no considerable or definite concern with bibliomania, either in its cause or cure. The parts of this subject which present themselves to my view, insomuch as they serve to nutrition or generation of the disease will be revealed in their place; and you that are readers in the meantime must be content with a running account of the physical parts as a preparative to the exposition of those spiritual and intellectual excellences which are the substance of succeeding sections of this treatise.

Of the parts of a book, there are two main divisions: the *outward* and the *inward*. The chief outward parts are situate forward and backward, for they constitute the membrane or skin, whose office is to clothe or bind the rest for the protection of the inward and more delicate and perishable parts. They are of a firm or limp consistency according as they are composed of boards of wood, as in old times, or, in the manner of to-day, of stout cards fashioned out of pulped wood, straw, or hemp; there are also limp bindings fashioned of paper or boards of lighter weight. And as the binding is the membrane or epidermis of the book itself, so the boards have a skin for their own protection, which is often the subject of decoration, like the tattooing on the skins of primitive peoples; but of this I discourse apart, and shall here only recite the further parts as sides, back, spine, doublures, panels, bands, joints and edges (with their various letterings, toolings, gildings, pigmentation), labels, clasps, and finally wrappers

or dust-jackets for the protection of the cover proper during the transit of the book from the publisher's office, through the shop, to the reader.

The inward parts comprise paper and print. The paper is the body of the book and may be thin or thick, according to purpose and ultimate form, whether that form is to be slim or fat, extended or concentrate. Papers are varied in size, consistency and colour. The sizes of the sheets are named variously, as Royal, Imperial, Foolscap, etc., and the book is designate by the number of folds made in the original state of the paper, called a sheet, as folio, duodecimo, octavo, quarto, which make up the leaves, each side of which is a page. The consistency or character of the paper is rough or smooth (also, as I have said, thick or thin), *laid* or *wove*, *watermarked* with semi-transparent lines or devices; straight or *deckle* edges, and fine or coarse in quality as it is made of pulped straw, wood, sisal, linen rags, or of old and used paper, as *shoddy* is composed of old and worn cloth. The sheets are printed and then folded in *gatherings* or *quires*, which in turn are sewn together by the binder, thus constituting the body or inward form of the book proper.

Typographically considered, a book is a world in itself, with a long history of varying methods and tastes, a complex technique, and an unbroken tradition from the days of the scribes who worked laboriously with stylus or pen, through those of the printer who designed and printed his pages, to those of the mechanized compositor of to-day who cannot design, working out the designs of the typographer who cannot print. Every type has its own character and range of sizes, and each printed page its particularities of design and layout, governing the making of a fair reading surface, and the whole so hedged about with technicalities expressed in their own jargon, that I shall leave it alone, and would only name these esoteric affairs to bring forward, at the outset, some general idea of the complexities upon which a book is built, as a preliminary to the ideas of bio-bibliology to be unfolded. The upshot of the matter being that the *corpus* or body of a book is no more than a design to an end, and that end is the convenient

presentation of its essence or authorship to a reader. Decoration, rich trappings, or other ornamentation, may be added for delight or homage, or even vanity, as I shall show; but they are tolerable only insofar as they hold no check upon the purpose of a book, which is to be read. And now to our theme.

II. OF SIZE AND CONVENIENCE

According to Dr. Johnson,[1] the best books, for size, are those that can be held in the hand, and carried to the fireside, or to any other convenient place. Most who love books and use them lovingly are of the same opinion. *Fi des gros livres!* exclaims Jules Janin,[2] *nous ne voulons plus que de petit format qui marche avec nous:* a fig for big books! *In angulo, cum libello,* a little book in a cosy corner. It is all there, the whole case. A book should be small enough to hold in the hand, and large enough to engage the eye at a single glance; it is thus a friend and a companion. *A big book is as bad as a great misfortune,*[3] and although he may have referred to the size of the work itself rather than to its *format,* which is the subject of my present discourse, it is only another objection to the same end: a book should not only be appropriate in style and matter, but, I say again, convenient in size; at the same time not all book-folk are of the same opinion. *I detest a quarto,* says Jane Austen;[4] but Horace Walpole prefers *quarto* to *octavo* because *a quarto lies free and open before one,* and he is surprised *how long the world was pestered with unwieldy folios.*[5] *No man,* said Dr. Johnson, *read long together with a folio on his table.*[6] Théophile Gautier, no book-lover, as I will show, has a greater dislike of *octavos* than of *folios,* because the *folios* could be used as presses or stools, but *octavos,* he exclaims, *the Devil take me, if I can derive the slightest benefit from them; I cannot imagine why they were ever made.*[7] But there is a place for each notwithstanding what

[1] *Johnsonian Miscellanies.* Hill. ii, 2. [2] *Le Livre.* 109. [3] Callimachus, Ath. iii, 72, *Fragment.* 359. [4] *Memoir,* J. E. Austen-Leigh. 108. [5] *Walpoliana.* 162. [6] *Johnsonian Miscellanies.* Hill. ii, 2. [7] Preface, *Les Jeunes-France.*

I have said, and a medium in book-sizes, as even Walpole implies, when he sighs out: *what a pity it is I was not born in the golden age of Louis the Fourteenth, when it was not only the fashion to write folios, but to read them too.*[1]

Edward FitzGerald, a very fastidious bookman, preferred Shakespeare in *folio*, of which he had both the Second and Third; *one had need of a big book to remember him by, for,* he laments, *Shakespeare is lost to the theatre.*[2] Trevelyan records that Macaulay *read Plato in a ponderous folio, sixteen inches long by ten broad, and weighing within half an ounce of twelve pounds.* It was the edition of Marsilius Ficinus of Frankfort, 1602, and *it contained nearly fourteen hundred closely printed pages of antique Greek type, bristling with those contractions which are a terror to the luxurious modern scholar.*[3]

I myself have known, and still know, the delight of sprawling over an eighteenth-century *quarto*, or a small *folio* of Jacobean days, and even, on occasion, larger, as that great *folio* of 1604 which contains Philemon Holland's translation of Plutarch's *Moralia*, a goodly portly book and a corpulent, as ever there was: a well, into which you may dip your bucket without fearing that it will run dry, a sea upon which you can sail without shortage of adventure or dearth of things to look at. I would not have him smaller, being so fortunate as to possess him in all the pomp of his ancient and learned amplitude, for he is vast by nature, as a whale is, or an elephant, and who would wish a whale a minnow, or an elephant a mouse? Boswell's *Johnson* is more opulent, and nowhere so like unto himself as he is in the roomy pages of the first edition; Burton reads better in *folio*, but not later than 1638; and Sir Thomas Browne must be sipped in the vintage of 1686. Yet I have my regrets at times, for I cannot take them out into the garden or nurse them in my armchair beside the fire; but this proves my case and Dr. Johnson's and that of all true bookmen, who, whatever their fad at particular moments, love best the book which can be read in hand anywhere and

[1] *Letters.* Cunningham. ii, 62. [2] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 26.
[3] *Marginal Notes of Lord Macaulay.* 54.

anywhen: *Books that you may carry to the fire and hold readily in your hand are the most useful after all.*[1]

Of these extremes of big and little I will speak briefly, for they are few among the multitude of books, and so foreign to the purpose of reading as to be, perhaps, the only veritable *biblia a-biblia*. Nor need I expatiate against them, for they have had their day and passed into limbo by reason of those same laws of the *survival of the fittest* which ordained the passing into fossildom of the Dinotherium and of the Icthyosaurus. The two *Brobdingnagian Choral Books*, measuring a yard in length and two feet wide, which Dibdin[2] saw in the library of the Duke of Sussex at Kensington Palace, are museum pieces, specimens, curiosities, recalling the books in the Library at Brobdingnag,[3] which Gulliver could read only after they had built for him *a kind of wooden Machine five-and-twenty Foot high, formed like a standing Ladder, the Steps being fifty Foot long*, which he would mount so that he could read the vast pages leaning open against the wall, beginning on the top step and so working his way downwards. The nearest approach to that great work were those *grand Aldines, enormous armfuls that require strong persons to handle*, or those volumes which contain the Denon collection of illustrations, which repose in the Escurial on *an elephantine lectern, weighing six tons, and moving on a pivot;* the volumes measure *six feet in height and four in breadth;* they are bound in the *famous yellow leather of Cordova*, and *heavily clasped and clamped with brass.*[4]

Elephant folio, which was once so popular for maps, engravings and Service Books, will rarely be used again because of the discovery of more ingenious methods of dealing with such material. The era of giant printed books has passed away as surely as that which produced MSS. as vast as the *Vernon*, in the Bodleian, whose type-area alone measures 15 by 12½ inches.[5] The last resort of the ancient passion for unwieldy books is the recurrent fashion for *Large Paper* copies, which are no encumbrance because they are show books and generally

[1] *Johnson*, Hawkins. 197. [2] *Reminiscences*. ii, 943. [3] Swift, *Gulliver's Travels*. [4] Percy Fitzgerald, *Book Fancier*. 142. [5] Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian*. 144.

supplementary to reading copies, as show dogs and show cattle are supplementary to the normal. No one uses them: they are monuments, museum pieces, or, where useful, exaggerations which strain a point to point a strain. The best that can be said of *Large Paper* is that it is *not a good absolute and in itself, but only when it is beautiful and appropriate.*[1] A library of *Large Paper* copies would be a necropolis of books, a bibliomaniac's Père Lachaise or Kensal Green.

In the opposite class are those diminutive books which cannot be read without the aid of a magnifying glass. These are freaks, their only defence and justification being their littleness. They are the toy-terriers of books, bibliographical lap-dogs. How small they can be is incredible. W. T. Spencer had a *Bible*, dated 1660, which was so small that it *would not cover your finger nail.* A man once entered his shop bragging that he carried a library in his hand-bag. He proved his statement by opening the bag and revealing a collection of such miniatures.[2] *The book which has the reputation of being the smallest printed book in the world* is *Galileo a Madame Cristina di Lorena*, 1615; it was printed in Italy and measures 15 by 10 millimetres.[3] There is a copy of it in the British Museum in a miniature Chippendale bookcase containing a whole library of Lilliputian books. In the Harleian Collection there is a *Bible* small enough to go into a walnut shell. The earliest known miniature English book is the *Hours of the Blessed Virgin* (1500), it measures an inch and a half by one inch, and is printed in black-letter.

Many small books are produced by lithographic and photographic processes, and are therefore not examples of typography. Fine examples of printing from microscopic types are rare in our time, but notable specimens of the past came from England, France, and Italy. The finest and most legible of the foreign type are probably, says Davenport, the *Types Microscopiques* of Henri Didot (Paris, 1765–1852). Notable also among such midgets are those pocket volumes of the past, Pickering's *Diamond Classics*, and the like, which

[1] Lang, *Library*. xiv–xv. [2] *Forty Years in My Bookshop*. xxxii.
[3] Davenport, *Byways among English Books*. 143.

are pleasant enough, but still no more than pretty toys, though better than freaks. Mark Pattison, says Percy Fitzgerald,[1] *had a special fancy for the little antique Latin pocket volumes published in myriads a couple of centuries ago.* It is curious, he thinks, for scholars to have issued *their profoundest lucubrations* in volumes no bigger than *Pocket Testaments;* but it was then the fashion to squeeze into what was called *portable shape*, histories, as *Strada*, who is as long as *Hume* or *Smollett*, or even *Gibbon. Eyes in those days*, he concludes, *must have been stouter and clearer.*

But I must end this chapter lest it become tedious, and leave the monsters and midgets to their born lovers; *longe alia mihi mens est*, my own tastes are otherwise; *in medio virtus*, I take a middle course, and confess to a liking for a small and slender *folio* without prejudice to my love for an *octavo* or a *twelve*, or even a *quarto* when the mood dictates and the circumstances are appropriate; and I will conclude by observing that although there are big *Elzevirs* and little *Elzevirs*, those who have sung their praises have had the little rather than the big in mind. I am sometimes moved to believe that, in this matter, affection expands from a beginning among the *twelves* to an ending among the *octavos;* but I shall not dogmatize, for the way of a man with a book is a mystery, yet I may infer, out of my own experience and that of my friends, that the quality of bibliophily proceeds in a *diminuendo:* one respects a *folio*, admires a *quarto*, and loves a *twelve;*

> For the row I prize is yonder,
> Away on the unglazed shelves,
> The bulged and the bruised *octavos,*
> The dear and the dumpy twelves;[2]

so let every bookman, in his own defence, set as good a face upon the business as he can.

III. OF LITERARY DIMENSIONS

Next to their physical size must be noted their measure as spiritual or intellectual entities. Here again there are diverse

[1] *Book Fancier.* 7. [2] Austin Dobson, *Poetical Works.* 194.

opinions, each proper to be considered; but it were superfluous to consider them all, though some few of greater importance I must point at. Dr. Johnson *was a great friend to books like* the French *Esprits d'un Tel* and *Beauties of Watts*, at which, he said, *a man will often look and be tempted to go on*,[1] when bigger books might have frightened him. *A big book*, says Myles Davies,[2] *is a scare-crow to the head and pocket of the author, student, buyer, and seller;* it is also *a harbour of ignorance*, and he attributes *the inexpugnable ignorance and superstition of the ancient heathens, degenerate Jews, and popish scholasters and canonists*, to the circumstance that they were *entrenched under the frightful bulk of huge, vast, and innumerable volumes*, among which he names the *great folio containing the celestial sciences that the Jewish rabbins fancied in a dream was given by God to his pupil Adam*, and the volumes of Zoroaster, entitled *The Similitude*, which is said to have taken up a space covered by 1260 hides of cattle.

The *grossness and multitude* of the books of Aristotle and Varro were *both a prejudice to their authors, and an hindrance to learning, and an occasion to the greatest part of them being lost; the largeness of Plutarch's treatises is a great cause of his being neglected; Origen's* 6000 *volumes (as Epiphanius will have it) were not only the occasion of his venting more numerous errors, but also for the most part of their perdition.* On the other hand, he contends, Longinus and Epictetus, *in their pamphlet Remains, are everyone's companions*, and *young mathematicians, freshwater physicians, civilian novices*, and *les apprentices en la ley d'Angleterre*, would *be at a loss and stand, and total discouragement*, were it not for Euclid's *Elements*, Hippocrates' *Aphorisms*, Justinian's *Institutes*, and Littleton's *Tenures*, in *small pamphlet volumes*. One of the great advantages the *Dispensary* has over *King Arthur* is its pamphlet size, and he commends Boileau's *Lutrin*, in respect of Perrault's and Chapelain's *St. Paulin* and *La Pucelle*, for the same reason, concluding that *these seem to pay a deference to the reader's quick and great understanding: those to mistrust his capacity, and to confine his time as well as his intellect.*

[1] *Johnsonian Miscellanies*. Hill. ii, 2. [2] Qt. D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature*. ii, 95–6.

South, in his *Sermon Against long Extempore Prayers*, supported short books for the good argument that *the reason of things lies in a little compass. Most of the writings and discourses in the world are but illustration and rhetoric, which*, he says, *signifies as much as nothing to a mind eager in pursuit after the causes and philosophical truth of things;* and he wisely holds that there would be no art or science could not *the mind gather the general natures of things out of the heap of numberless particulars*, and bind them into *short aphorisms* and *propositions;* made thus *portable to the memory* they are ready and at hand for practical application and use as there shall be occasion. Addison[1] supports Callimachus in his claim that *a great book is a great evil*, and points out in explanation of the cause of big books that authors of them have *established it as a kind of rule that a man ought to be dull sometimes*, and so make allowances for *many rests and nodding-places in a voluminous writer*. At the same time he is all for brevity and quintessence, and no more *folios*. He would have the works of an age concentrated in a few shelves and the millions of superfluous volumes annihilated:

> Les longs ouvrages me font peur.
> Loin d'épuiser une matière
> Il faut n'en prendre que la fleur.[2]

The revolt against the big book developed to so great an extent in the eighteenth century that some even resented the size of *Gibbon*, one of the few big histories that no true bookman would shorten by so much as a chapter. The original edition was in six *quarto* volumes, which appeared at different times. It was Gibbon's custom to present by his own hand copies as published to the Duke of Cumberland. Bringing the third volume to him one day, *elated with pride at the delightful office, and imagining as he went, what handsome things the duke would say to him*—all he got from His Royal Highness was: *What? ah! another damned big square book, eh!*[3]

I hate all big Books, Edward FitzGerald told Quaritch,[4] and

[1] *Spectator*. 124. [2] 'Long works frighten me; far from exhausting a subject, one should only skim the cream.' La Fontaine. [3] William Davis, *Olio of Anecdotes*. 7. [4] *Letters to Bernard Quaritch*. 80.

he confessed he had given all his own away because of *unhandiness as well as want of room.* All *verse*, he gave out,[1] should be in *a handy pocketable size*, and this was not only an objection to corporeal bulk, for it was his habit to reduce the obesity of masterpieces by extracting pages, until they were slim enough for his fancy. I doubt not that he would have upheld Joubert's contention that *every work of genius, be it epic or didactic, is too long if it cannot be read in one day.*[2]

Notwithstanding so much may be alleged in favour of small books, scholars of former times regarded them with contempt. Isaac D'Israeli brings much evidence to support the statement.[3] Scaliger cavils at Drusius for the smallness of his books; and one of the famous printers of that time (Moret, successor to Plantin) complained to the learned Puteanus that his books were too small for sale, purchasers being scared away by their diminutive size. Puteanus referred him to Plutarch, whose works consisted of small treatises; but the printer took fire at the comparison, and turned him out of the shop for being so vain as to pretend that he wrote in any manner like Plutarch. Jurieu reproached Colomies for being *a great author of little books.* It was the humour of a certain Mæcenas (he quotes out of Addison),[4] who *cheered the lustre of his patronage with the steams of a good dinner*, to place his guests according to the size and thickness of the books they had published. At the head of the table sat those who had published in *folio, folissimo;* next the authors in *quarto;* then those in *octavo.* At such a table, he says, *Blackmore* would have had the precedence of *Gray;* which reveals his own opinion, supported out of Francis Osborne: *Huge volumes, like the ox roasted whole at Bartholomew Fair, may proclaim plenty of labour, but afford less of what is delicate, savoury, and well-concocted, than smaller pieces.*

But who shall decide the controversy? I shall not attempt it, beyond saying that in my experience authentic bookmen are insatiate, they want their favourites to be endless: *I love those*

[1] *Letters to Bernard Quaritch.* 59. [2] *Selections.* Trans. Lyttleton. 140.
[3] *Cur. Lit.* ii, 96–8. [4] *Spectator.* 529.

large, still books, said Tennyson of *Clarissa;*[1] which a modern bookman supports when he boldly announces that *novels of character must be long to be great.*[2] The fixed devotion of some of them to one book is no more than an aspiration to that end, unless it is in like case with those of short memory, who, like William Cory,[3] was made less poor in books since he could go to the few he possessed again and again *with a fair sense of discovery*. W. B. Yeats loves the long prose romances of William Morris. They are the only books he reads slowly so that he may not come too quickly to the end.[4] This is the plaint of the best of them, they would have, as who would not,

A linkèd sweetness long drawn out.[5]

A pleasure exhausted! sighs Maurice de Guérin,[6] after reading the last page of *Etudes de la Nature. It is one of those books*, he says, *which one wishes would never come to an end.* All his life Mitford[7] *delighted in voluminous works.* He contemplated *very long, very big books* with *a sense of enjoyment*, and shrank with *aversion and horror from that invention of the enemy—an Abridgement.* Bruce's *Abyssinia* took such *possession* of him that *he named a whole colony of Bantams* after that traveller's Abyssinian princes and princesses; and he never felt *greater disgust than at seeing this magnificent work cut down to a thick, dumpy volume, seven inches by five.* He experienced a like feeling when he met Drinkwater's *Siege of Gibraltar*, where he had *first learned to tremble at the grim realities of war*, degraded from *a goodly quarto* into *a meagre pamphlet.*

Most of us would be as vexed as he was at the abridgement of a favourite, looking upon it as a desecration, the transformation of what is whole and virile into something meagre and contemptible, like a man into a eunuch. But this has little to do with my present theme, which is of the true-born reader's preference for big or little books; and I have suffi-

[1] Edward FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 419. [2] Viscount Grey, 'Pleasure of Reading', *Fallodon Papers.* 22. [3] *Letters and Journals.* 484. [4] Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil.* 30. [5] Milton, *L'Allegro.* [6] *Journal.* Trans. Trebutien. 72. [7] *Recollections of a Literary Life.*

ciently explicated these differences to show that, although of an insatiate appetite, good bookmen are at one whether they chew over a little book or browse at large over a big one. This only let me add here, for I return to the theme, that in some cases those hard censures of the one or the other must be taken *cum grano salis*, for the two opinions may alternate, or even exist side by side, in the same person. It is a question of mood or whim, and my own conviction is that no bibliophile was ever all out for books of any one size.

PART III

THE PLEASURE OF BOOKS

I. OF READING FOR ITS OWN SAKE

Of the reading of books there is no end, and no end to its delight:

> I never knew
> More sweet and happy hours than I employ'd
> Upon my books.[1]

I was so allured to read, Milton confirms,[2] *that no recreation came to me better welcome;* no exercise of mortals more agreeable, *what party*, asks Thomas Carlyle, *so good as reading Thucydides, Dante or Johannes von Müller?*[3] or more satisfying, whether for consolation or composure, *in omnibus requiem quaesivi*, said Thomas à Kempis, *sed non inveni nisi in angulis et libellis.*[4] *I too*, comments Robert Southey, *have found repose where he did, in books and retirement, but it was there alone I sought it; to these my nature, under the direction of a merciful Providence, led me betimes, and the world can offer nothing which should tempt me from them.*[5]

For amusement they are infallible; reading is not *necessarily study*.[6] Another authority holds that *the use of books for pleasure* is *the most satisfactory recreation; without having acquired the power of reading for pleasure*, he says, *none of us can be independent.*[7] Dryden never read anything but for pleasure, and books, whatever other purpose they serve, are always the idle man's best friend. Montaigne's works have been called the *Breviary*

[1] James Shirley, *The Lady of Pleasure*. Act ii, Sc. 1. [2] *An Apology for Smectymnuus*. [3] *New Letters*. i, 116. [4] 'I have sought rest everywhere, and only found it in corners and books.' Qt. Herbert Rosweyd, Preface to *Imitatio*. Antwerp. (1617.) [5] Qt. in *Book-Lover's Enchiridion*. 162. [6] Lubbock, *Pleasures of Life*. i, 56. [7] Viscount Grey. 'Recreation', *Fallodon Papers*. 66.

of Idlers;[1] it is an epithet which might qualify whole libraries, for no other works of man are more eligible to that end, *no apparatus, no appointment of time and place, being necessary for the enjoyment of reading;*[2] no class, condition, or age exempt. *Who is he*, enjoins Robert Burton,[3] *that is now wholly overcome with idleness, or otherwise involved in a labyrinth of worldly cares, troubles, and discontents, that will not be much lightened in his mind by reading of some enticing story, true or feigned, where (as in a glass) he shall observe what our forefathers have done, the beginnings, ruins, falls, periods of Commonwealths, private men's actions displayed to the life, etc.*

Thus may books command their lovers and thus they do command and captain the soul of man. *Ut studiis se literarum a mortalitate vindicet*, seek in literature deliverance from mortality.[4] *All literature*, a recent observer claims, *springs from the ineradicable instinct in man to communicate good; and thus almost all books assure us that the soul is divine.*[5] So great this efficacy of books that Thomas Carlyle claims reading to be one of the *Rights of Man* and *a very cruel injustice if you deny it to a man*,[6] for, by their beneficence to readers in all times and stations, they are necessities of life to some and may yet be so to all. In the busy world they are respites and recreations, as I shall sufficiently make out; and, *because the soul of Man is not by its own Nature or observation furnisht with sufficient Materials to work upon*, books are essential to solitude, for it is only by a continual recourse to them that the soul can be replenished with *fresh supplies*, otherwise the solitary would *grow indigent, and be ready to starve without them.*[7] To which I add that which seems to me more probable, that without them, not only the solitary, but the social grow needy of mind and impoverished of spirit, for books are the granaries in which the harvest of mankind is stored; they are the best, readiest, surest way to those inward riches which all wise men approve. In

[1] Isaac D'Israeli, *Miscellany of Literature.* [2] John Aikin, in *Book-Lover's Enchiridion.* 126. [3] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 101. [4] Pliny, Qt. Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean.* i, 71. [5] Garrod, 'How to Know a Good Book from a Bad', *Profession of Poetry.* 256. [6] *New Letters.* i, 212. [7] Cowley, 'Of Solitude', *Essays.*

proof of this, Confucius owned that in the pursuit of knowledge he forgot not only his *food* and his *sorrows*, but *he did not even perceive that old age was coming on.*[1]

Yet, for mine own part, and in spite of what may seem otherwise, I scorn all special pleading for what should be evident, and I here say, and shall hint again and again, that reading is not a duty, and if it is not a pleasure it is a waste of time, and

> Lectio, quae placuit, decies repetita placebit,[2]

what we read with pleasure we read again with pleasure, for *the desire of mind to mind is never satiated but rather continually increased by inter-communion;*[3] thus reading is justified. Whatever other purposes it may have, and there are many, it is its own reward. There are counsels and records to support this tenent, out of which, because every man cannot attend to read or peruse them, I will collect in this section some few of the more notable.

II. PLEASURE A CONDITION BOTH PROFITABLE AND HONEST

As he that is invited to a feast eats what is set before him, and looks for no other, enjoy then that thou hast at this banquet, and ask no more, forasmuch as it is sweet, or pleasant, for a man to read books, and be recreated by them. It is also an evident truth, that without both these sweetnesses or pleasures, or one of them at least, neither the felicity of books can be tasted nor their goodness be received, for *literature does not please by moralizing us; it moralizes us because it pleases:*[4]

> No profit grows where is no pleasure ta'en;
> In brief, sir, study what you most affect;[5]

which is no more than the intention of Jeremy Collier[6] where

[1] Qt. Lubbock, *Pleasures of Life*. i, 54–5. [2] Horace, *A. P.* 365. [3] Coventry Patmore. *Memoirs,* Champneys. i, 135. [4] Garrod, 'How to Know a Good Book from a Bad.' *Profession of Poetry*. 264. [5] *Taming of the Shrew*. i, 1. [6] 'Of the Entertainment of Books.' *Essays*. ii, 97.

he says that *if books are well chosen, they neither dull the Appetite, nor strain the Capacity*, but, on the contrary, *they refresh the Inclination, and strengthen the Power, and improve under Experiment: And which is best of all, they Entertain and Perfect at the same time; convey Wisdom and Knowledge through Pleasure.* Enjoyment is taste untrammelled, it is the only test of predilection, for, as Dr. Johnson holds, *no man is a hypocrite in his pleasures,*[1] and that even for *general improvement, a man should read whatever his immediate inclination prompts him to,* for, *if we read without inclination, half the mind is employed in fixing the attention,* and only half left *to be employed on what we read.*[2] Lubbock is therefore right when he maintains *that we profit little by books which we do not enjoy.*[3] Therefore I accept pleasure, suavity, jocundity, and other terms of the like importance, for one and the same thing in the rules of reading, as the Epicureans do in their rules of life.[4] The inference is exceeding plain, for if a book is not pleasurable it is unreadable and thus defeats its aim, which, as I have said, and will say again, is to be read. It is equally evident that this pleasure of books is widespread and diverse, for they not only *delight us to the marrow,*[5] profoundly move, or exalt us up to heaven, but they entertain the passing fancy, the light and evanescent whim; so *let every one take the view* (or the book) *which pleases him, and enjoy it.*[6]

There have not wanted some, chiefly in times past, who with great pomp and ostentation have discoursed of these pleasurable qualities in life no less than in the arts, as if they were evil in themselves. I say such inferences are devoid of sense, as they are of charity and good taste: *the soul of sweet delight can never be defil'd;*[7]

> Wherefore I assert:—if Reason's only function were
> to heighten our pleasure, that were vindication enough.[8]

[1] *Life,* Boswell. Ed. Hill, iv, 316. [2] *Ib.* iii, 43. [3] *Pleasures of Life.* i, 63. [4] Epicurus, *Morals.* iii, 8. [5] Petrarch, in Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 36. [6] Longinus, *The Sublime.* Trans. Prickard. 67. [7] William Blake, *Marriage of Heaven and Hell.* [8] Bridges, *Testament of Beauty.* i, 202–3.

These moral cavillers, Chadbands, spoil-sports, impotent and resentful ones, whose chief profession is

> all pleasure to destroy,
> Save what is in destroying,[1]

together with those dull and incompetent teachers, still extant in some measure, who have so misused books in churches, chapels, little bethels, schools, colleges, seminaries, etc., as to make them unpalatable to the young, and so to promote bookshyness in maturity as a common distemper, which it still is in all lands. Dibdin gives an extreme instance in that of a schoolmaster of Suabia, who, for fifty-one years, *had superintended a large institution with old-fashioned severity*, and *in the course of his exertions* had given 911,500 *canings*, 121 *floggings*, 209,000 *custodes*, 136,000 *tips with the ruler*, 10,200 *boxes on the ear*, and 22,700 *tasks by heart;* and in addition he had made 700 boys *stand on peas*, 6000 *kneel on a sharp edge of wood*, 5000 *wear the fool's cap*, and 1700 *hold the rod*.[2] But I rove, I confess, and talk like a reformer (which I am not). *The wisest man preaches no doctrines; he has no scheme; he sees no rafter, not even a cobweb, against the heavens. It is clear sky*.[3] I am not my brother's keeper; and if there were still less readers than there are, and books still less accessible, I should be content, for every true reader will work out his own salvation with taste and affection his best guides.

What we most need is not more books or more readers, but more time for reading, although I would not lay too much stress even on that point, for in the last resort we are the sires of our opportunities, and if *non cuivis homini contingit adire Corinthum*,[4] all have not the luck to visit Corinth, desire carries more thither than otherwise would be possible, good luck being the ratio between what we get and the constancy with which we desire it. So to this defence of the pleasure of books I shall bring no more support in this place than the high evidence of Wordsworth, who, in his young days by

[1] Milton, *Paradise Lost*. ix. [2] *Bibliomania*. (1911.) 375. [3] Thoreau, *Week on the Concord*. Scott Lib. 60. [4] Hor., i *Ep*. xvii, 36.

Windermere, read poetry with a friend, and gladness came upon them both because they were

> Lifted above the ground by airy fancies,
> More bright than madness or the dreams of wine;
> And, though full oft the objects of our love
> Were false, and in their splendour overwrought,
> Yet was there surely then no vulgar power
> Working within us,—nothing less, in truth,
> Than that most noble attribute of man,
> Though yet untutored and inordinate,
> That wish for something loftier, more adorned,
> Than is the common aspect, daily garb,
> Of human life. What wonder, then, if sounds
> Of exultation echoed through the groves!
> For images and sentiments, and words,
> And everything encountered or pursued
> In that delicious world of poesy,
> Kept holiday, a never-ending show,
> With music, incense, festival, and flowers![1]

After such words I am disposed to close this argument with Augustine Birrell where he claims that *literature exists to please —to lighten the burden of men's lives; to make them for a short while forget their sorrow and their sins, their silenced hearths, their disappointed hopes, their grim futures—and,* as he well adds, *those men of letters are the best loved who have best performed literature's truest office,*[2] for, as Keats insinuated for his own clan:

> they shall be accounted poet kings
> Who simply tell the most heart-easing things.[3]

III. DELIGHT THAT VARIES WITH TIME AND PLACE

We may not all be bibliophiles of genius, all illustrious; still less, all serene and rich in books, with time and capacity to enjoy them; but we are as sufficient as we are various, and know our own food. We are as various as our books and our love of them; and as a piece of arras is composed of several

[1] *Prelude.* v, 567–83. [2] 'The Office of Literature', *Collected Essays.* iii, 56. [3] 'Sleep and Poetry.'

parcels, some wrought of silk, some of gold or silver, or embroidered of divers colours, all to serve for the exornation of the whole; or as music is made of divers chords and keys, harmonies and cacophonies, a total sum of many small numbers, so is the pleasure of books in its greatest corporeality, a library (whether big or little) of several inequal books and the faculty variously to relish them. One will like this, another that, as dishes are chosen at a feast, not for the good they do us but for the pleasure they give us, there being no greater good than enjoyment; as *to dine with H. B. Wheatley and to fondle his 'Drydens', was to sup with Atticus;*[1] such are the very words of their profession, and an exercise of logic which few bookmen would put to doubt in so rapt a relation.

The exquisite moment of joy, to be prolonged according to taste or skill (or both combined), is the object, as in the amorous poet,

> Oh heaven of Love! thou moment of Delight![2]

Let every reader cite further examples from his own adventures; for my part I hold it fortunate that tastes are various; *jucundum nihil est, nisi quod reficit varietas,*[3] nothing is pleasant unless spiced with variety. *Let your bookcases and your shelves be your gardens and your pleasure-grounds. Pluck the fruit that grows therein, gather the roses, the spices, and the myrrh. If your soul be satiate and weary, change from garden to garden, from furrow to furrow, from sight to sight. Then will your desire renew itself and your soul be satisfied with delight;*[4] remembering, perchance, that

> short retirement urges sweet return.[5]

But in the present matter, the effect of this consideration ought to be (and in this I find most content) that the greater the variety of tastes the greater the variety of desirable books, and the wider the opportunity of enjoyment.

[1] Harold Child, 'Ego et Libri mei', *Bibliophile's Almanack* (1927). 16. [2] Rochester, 'The Perfect Enjoyment', *Poems of Affairs of State.* (1697.) 12. [3] Bacon, *Ornamenta Rationalia.* [4] Judah Ibn Tibbon, in Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages.* 354–5. [5] Milton, *Paradise Lost.* ix, 250.

It may be perhaps not impertinently added that this same argument holds good of that outward association with books peculiar to several collectors whose desire is not primarily to read. If all should be *Huths* and *Huntingtons* there would not be enough covetable copies to go round, and this extrinsic bibliophily would succumb in a bibliomaniacal brawl in which *Croesi* and *Darii* would continuously rage together over the shrinking treasure-trove of *rariora*, until the fall of that *Götterdämmerung* when *desirable copies* would cease to *occur*. Who should then fill his shelves, build his *bibliothèque intime*, make his several choice for bookish raiment? We should starve for company and sue at last to be as we were at first. But to this problem I shall return; in the meantime 'tis exceeding likely to conjecture, that God hath appointed this inequality to sublimate our pleasure by the tonic of effort; for it is not solely, except in some instances, that the books themselves bring pleasure; we bribe them to a revelation of their inward riches by a hint of our own quality of enjoyment. Books are to us what we are to them. *Nihil aliud necessarium ut sis miser* (saith Cardan[1]) *quam ut te miserum credas*, let thy fortune be what it will, thy mind alone makes thee poor or rich, miserable or happy; but being *nulli secundi*, a quintessence of the most sensitive minds, books vary with our intentions, our moods, and our years: they *change like friends, like ourselves, like everything; but they are most piquant in the contrasts they provoke . . . the vicissitudes of years are printed and packed in a thin octavo, and the shivering ghosts of desire and hope return to their forbidden home in the heart and fancy.*[2]

IV. POVERTY NO HINDRANCE RICHES NO HELP

Nor is it the number possessed which so much commends them to their lovers. I myself have seen a man miserably dejected in a pleasant library, and yet again another well occupied and at good ease with a solitary book. *There is a great*

[1] *De consolat.* Lib. 3. [2] Reference lost.

deal of difference between the eager man who wants to read a book, and the tired man who wants a book to read.[1] I may yet add, therefore, a word or two for a corollary, for there are many rich collectors, I dare boldly say it, that lie amid *First Folios* and *Groliers*, *Clovis Eves* and *Samuel Mearns*, *Kelmscott* '*Chaucers*' and *Doves* '*Bibles*'; with *first editions*, *unique copies*, pampered every day, in their luxurious libraries, who live at less heart's ease, with more anguish than many a clerk who makes a lucky-dip in the twopenny box, or poor student who, as William Cobbett, spends his supper-money on a coveted volume.

George Gissing bought dozens of books with money which ought to have been spent upon *what are called the necessaries of life*. *Many a time*, he confesses, *I have stood before a stall, or a bookseller's window, torn by conflict of intellectual desire and bodily need;* and at the dinner hour, his stomach clamouring for food, he has been so held up by the tempting price of a long-coveted volume, that he has secured it with the *pangs of famine*. His copy of Heyne's *Tibullus* was thus grabbed from the stall of the old bookshop in Goodge Street for sixpence, when sixpence was all he had in the world; and although that sum would have purchased *a plate of meat and vegetables*, he dared not hope that the volume *would wait until the morrow, when a certain small sum fell due* to him. *I paced the pavement*, he recalls, *fingering the coppers in my pocket, eyeing the stall, two appetites at combat within me*. The book was bought, and as he made shift with *a dinner of bread and butter* he *gloated over the pages.*[2]

Let me conclude these citations with that familiar passage from *Elia*, which records how the essayist let a brown suit hang upon him until it was threadbare because of *a folio Beaumont and Fletcher* which he *dragged home late at night* from Barker's in Covent Garden. He and his sister had *eyed* this volume for weeks, unable to make up their minds to buy it; then of a sudden comes decision near ten o'clock on a Saturday night, and Elia sets off from Islington to Covent Garden

[1] G. K. Chesterton, *Charles Dickens*. 99. [2] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. 31–32.

fearing it may be too late. The old bookseller grumbles, as he opens his shop, and *by the twinkling taper* (*for he was setting bedwards*) lights out the relic from among his dusty treasures. Elia secures the prize and lugs it home, *wishing it were twice as cumbersome. When you presented it to me*, his sister recalls, *and when we were exploring the perfectness of it . . . and while I was repairing some of the loose leaves with paste, which your impatience would not suffer to be left till daybreak—was there no pleasure in being a poor man? or can those neat black clothes which you wear now, and are so careful to keep brushed, since we became rich and finical, give you half the honest vanity with which you flaunted it about in that overworn suit—your old corbeau—for four or five weeks longer than you should have done, to pacify your conscience for the mighty sum of fifteen—or sixteen shillings was it?—a great affair we thought it then—which you had lavished on the old folio.*[1] The admonition, I think, is not unreasonable, for the rich can never own such delights, and it will fully answer any objections, so moralize this fable by thyself.

V. TREASURIES OF HAPPINESS NEVER EXHAUSTED

To these conjectures I may adventure to subjoin another, namely, that the fulness of this pleasure of books is, in the familiar saying, a gift, alike removed from other influences or conditions, and not common to all men. Only the congenital bookman discovers in the memory of reading in times past a treasury of present delight, as Hazlitt, when, after thirty years, the sight of his copies of *Paradise Lost* and the *Reflections on the French Revolution* recaptured the pleasure with which he first *dipped into them* at Shrewsbury School, where he had won them as prizes. *That time is past*, he mourns, '*with all its giddy raptures*': but so sweet the recollection he is determined to preserve its memory, '*embalmed with odours*';[2] just as he gloats on the recollection that his first meeting, as a boy, with *Tom*

[1] 'Old China', *Last Essays of Elia.* [2] *The Plain Speaker.* 79.

Jones in Cooke's *British Novelists* was *a dance through life, a perpetual gala-day.*[1]

Talk of the happiness of getting a great prize in the Lottery! Southey exclaims;[2] what is it to opening a box of books! He compares the delectable recreation of lifting the lid to what we shall feel when *Peter the Porter opens the door upstairs, and says, 'Please to walk in, Sir'*. Well may Thomas Love Peacock claim that there is no place in which even the *outside of a book* is not *an innocent and becoming spectacle,*

> Not daily conned, but glorious still to view,
> With glistening letters wrought in red and blue,[3]

or John Aikin, that without books he had never been able to pass a single day to his entire satisfaction; for they are *at the head of all the pleasures which offer themselves to the man of liberal education; in variety, durability, and facility of attainment, no other can stand in competition with it; and even in intensity it is inferior to few;* and he supports his argument by the supreme fact that books give us the power *to call up the shades of the greatest and wisest men that ever existed, and oblige them to converse with us on the most interesting topics;* 'tis *an inestimable privilege*, he well says, and *superior to all common enjoyments;* and an added advantage that from this feast of the *choicest thoughts of the ablest men in their best dress*, we can exclude *dullness and impertinence*, and open our doors only to *wit and good sense.*[4]

Hazlitt merrily inculcates that reading is *the greatest pleasure in life*, and others come near to this opinion, as Leigh Hunt: *the most heart-felt of all our enjoyments;* and Southey: *old friends and old books are the best things this world affords. The habit of reading*, Anthony Trollope testifies,[5] *is the only enjoyment in which there is no alloy; it lasts when all other pleasures fade*, and will make *our hours pleasant* as long as we live. The *purest pleasures* Cobden ever knew were *intercourse with intelligent*

[1] *Ib.* 69. [2] In a letter to Coleridge, quoted in *Book-Lovers' Anthology.* 5. [3] O. W. Holmes, 'The Study', *Poems.* [4] John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to his Son.* [5] Speech at Bolton, Dec. 7, 1868.

minds and *communion with the departed great,* through books by his own fireside.[1] Milton, at the University, is so *allur'd to read, that no Recreation* comes to him *better welcome.*[2] Gibbon,[3] comfortably seated in his library, in his own easy chair, before his own fire, after a journey, rejoices in the feeling that he is *surrounded with a thousand old acquaintances of all ages and characters, who are ready to answer a thousand questions* which he is impatient to ask:

> And to hem yeve I feyth and ful credence,
> And in myn herte have hem in reverence
> So hertely, that ther is game noon,
> That fro my bokes maketh me to goon.[4]

So sweet the pleasure of reading that (saith Burton) *all those ornaments and childish bubbles of wealth are not worthy to be compared to them,*[5] and, *to me,* Leo Allatius well seconds him, *the light of the sun, the day, and life itself, would be joyless and bitter if I had not something to read;*[6] which Prospero in *The Tempest* supports when he finds his library *dukedom large enough,* prizing certain volumes above his dukedom. Macaulay ventures even further, books becoming *everything* to him: *If I had at this moment any choice of life,* he says, *I would bury myself in one of those immense libraries* (at the Universities) and *never pass a waking hour without a book before me.*[7] But to leave all declamatory speeches and verses in their praise, I will confine myself to my present subject, which is to assert and show how they have given pleasure by the reading of them or by their presence.

Some are fully convinced that through them they enclose their desires in the security and satisfaction of their own minds, and I think that the arguments that are brought by a recent ingenious author are perpendicular to this point, when he makes Henry Wimbush recite his opinion that books promote superior pleasures to such desirable *human contacts* as

[1] Address at Manchester Athenæum, Nov. 1847. [2] 'Apology Against Smectymnuus.' *Works.* (1697.) 335. [3] *Autobiography and Correspondence.* 269. [4] Chaucer, *Legende of Goode Women.* Prologue. i. 29. [5] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 104. [6] Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 54. [7] *Life,* Trevelyan (1909.) i, 343.

love and friendship. These have been highly valued in the past because books were *scarce and difficult to reproduce;* but as *reading becomes more and more habitual and widespread, an ever-increasing number of people will discover that books will give them all the pleasures of social life and none of its intolerable tedium.*[1] There is support for this from many sources, but notably in the argument, often put forth, that books are sure protectors, not only against the ravages of Time, but against those of

> Business, which the Muses hate,[2]

for they translate our leisure into quiet happiness, and if, as Dibdin[3] claims, it is a *fictitious* happiness, it is none the less *real, inasmuch as it produces positive sensations of delight,* and no happiness, real or unreal, can do more, so, he advises,[4] *build your book-nest to forget the world without, and the many wretched creatures that crawl upon its surface,* for, as I may buttress him out of Cowley,[5] *if once we be thoroughly engaged in the Love of Letters, instead of being wearied with the length of any day, we shall only complain of the shortness of our whole life:*

> And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
> Grudge every minute as it passes by.[6]

VI. THE GOLDEN RULE FOR READERS

But to make an end of these controversies, and scatter them abroad, let me put out that reading hath many purposes, as many perchance as there are books and readers; and whatever their attitude, aim, object, readers, I say again, read best who read for their own delight; of which George Gissing[7] may be cited as a final and sufficient witness: *To what end do I read and remember? Surely,* he submits, *as foolish a question as ever man put to himself. You read for your own pleasure, for your solace and strengthening. Pleasure, then, purely selfish? Solace which endures for an hour and strengthening for no combat? Ay, but I know, I*

[1] Aldous Huxley, *Crome Yellow.* 304. [2] Cowley, *Pindaric Ode.* [3] *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 608–9. [4] *Reminiscences.* ii, 946. [5] 'Of Solitude', *Essays.* [6] William Morris, 'An Apology', *Earthly Paradise.* [7] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 55.

know. With what heart should I live here in my cottage, waiting for life's end, were it not for those hours of seeming idle reading?

If that be deemed an insufficient argument and a stronger defence be required, take Montaigne: *I love no books but such as are pleasant and easy, and which tickle me, or such as comfort and counsel me, to direct my life and death; Logical* and *Aristotelian ordinances* held no attraction for one who only endeavoured to become *more wise and sufficient and not more witty and eloquent;* he does not busy himself to anatomize *death and voluptuousness,* for of these he understands only what is understandable. At the first reading of a book he seeks out good and solid reasons, that may instruct him how to sustain their assaults; he seeks neither *grammatical subtilties, nor logical quiddities, nor the wittie contexture of choice words, or arguments, and syllogismes;* these serve not his turn.[1]

Yet in these as in other affairs *the golden rule is that there are no golden rules;*[2] nothing against a good stomach, as the saying is; we must take our choice, refraining rather by experience of ill than by precept of good; live and learn, until good taste is formed, then you may with safety side with Philodemus when he sings:

> Philosopher, whom dost thou most affect,
> Stoics austere, or Epicurus' sect?
>
> Friend, 'tis my grave infrangible design
> With those to study, and with these to dine.[3]

Generally thus much we may conclude, with Bronson Alcott,[4] that *that is a good book which is opened with expectation and closed with profit,* provided we agree that *profit* may differ in kind with every good book, being sometimes a pearl of wisdom, at others a golden vision; sometimes the silver of happiness, anon the bronze of information; nor would I despise that most fickle of all profits, entertainment, when

> words themselves
> Move us with conscious pleasure;[5]

[1] 'Of Bookes.' *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii. [2] Bernard Shaw, 'Maxims for Revolutionists.' *Man and Superman.* 227. [3] Trans. Richard Garnett, *Idylls and Epigrams.* 59. [4] *Table Talk.* i, 2. [5] Wordsworth, *Prelude.* v, 44–5.

all the more so because, as Viscount Grey has it, the *deep and abiding pleasure* of reading not only *increases the more it is indulged*, but *actually refreshes and restores as well as entertains*.[1] But apart from all high-minded arguments, amusement has its place. 'Tis better many times to be entertained than improved, and *dulce est desipere in loco*, to play the fool now and then is not amiss, for *it is just as well to be a little giddy-pated, if we are to feel at home on this teeming earth*.[2] There is a time for all things.

[1] 'The Pleasure of Reading.' *Fallodon Papers*. 11. [2] Logan Pearsall Smith, *Life and Letters*. (April 1930.)

PART IV

THE ART OF READING

I. ÆSTHETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A book is not complete until it has found a mate who can read and understand. *Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli,*[1] for *'tis the good reader that makes the good book; in every book he finds passages which seem confidences or asides hidden from all else and unmistakably meant for his ear;*[2] *the profit of books is according to the sensibility of the reader; the profoundest thought or passion sleeps as in a mine, until it is discovered by an equal mind and heart.*[3] To accept a book for what it is—the triune creation of author, printer, and reader—is to accept these exalted opinions. Physically disposed, a book is an amalgam of paper, ink, and type; but mingled with these ingredients there is that which we call 'the author', and he in turn is mind, emotion, imagination, filtered through the senses and distilled into words and sentences, which only come fully to life at the magic touch of the reader, who must himself supply the forms, colours, sentiments, to which the writer's symbols correspond. *It will,* says Anatole France,[4] *depend on him whether these be dull or brilliant, hot with passion or cold as ice;* each word being no less than a *magic finger that sets a fibre of the brain vibrating like a harp-string,* and *so invokes a note from the sounding-board of the soul;* for, as Vernon Lee sums it up, *the words which are the writer's materials for expression are but the symbol of the ideas already existing in the mind of the reader.* The writer thus *playing on the Reader's mind, as the pianist, although his fingers touch only the keyboard, is really playing on*

[1] 'Books have their fate from the capacities of their readers.' Ter. Maurus. Qt. Thomas Wilson, *Maxims.* (1898.) 9. [2] Emerson, 'Success', *Society and Solitude.* (1870.) 249. [3] Emerson, 'Quotation and Originality', *Letters and Social Aims.* (1898.) 143. [4] *Garden of Epicurus.* Trans. Allinson. 42.

the strings.[1] There must, of course, be strings to play on. Small wonder that a great reader is almost as rare as a great writer. Sir Walter Raleigh held[2] that *there are only two or three real readers alive at any given time,* and Emerson claimed[3] that *there are not in the world at any one time more than a dozen persons who read and understand Plato.*

Since writing, then, is *justly denominated an art,* reading should be permitted the same distinction. I will cite Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch as a chief patron of this notion. He boldly gives out that *Reading is an Art,*[4] if only because it depends so greatly upon *selection,* which is an art in itself: *Selection implies skilful practice. Skilful practice is only another term for art;*[5] and another observer as stiffly maintains that *it is almost as much an art as writing.*[6] To read *well,* that is *to read true books in a true spirit, is a noble exercise;* it requires training such as athletes undergo: *steady intention almost of the whole life to this object; books must be read as deliberately and reservedly as they were written.*[7]

To receive with happy discrimination ideas adorned by the art of writing is *a task not less useful than writing.*[8] *It is a faculty to be acquired, not a natural gift,*[9] for *there is something which a reader himself must bring to the book.* He must bring himself, and *when a man says he sees nothing in a book, he very often means that he does not see himself in it.*[10] There may here be some defect sometimes in the author, and I hold with Logan Pearsall Smith, that *the great art of writing is the art of making people real to themselves with words.*[11] *All books,* Bulwer-Lytton will have, *grow homilies by time;*[12] but only, he ought to have added, by time conditioned by readers.

Nothing ever becomes real till it is experienced, Keats advises, *even a Proverb is no proverb to you till Life has illustrated it;*[13] *axioms in philosophy are not axioms till they are proved upon our*

[1] *Handling of Words.* 41–44. [2] *Letters.* i, 233. [3] 'Spiritual Laws', *Essays.* (1885.) 123. [4] *On the Art of Reading.* 24. [5] *Ib.* 26. [6] Bernard Lintot, *End Papers.* 154. [7] Thoreau, *Walden,* Scott Lib. 99. [8] Isaac D'Israeli, *Misc. Lit.* (1801.) 173. [9] Frederic Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 24. [10] A. W. and J. C. Hare, *Guesses at Truth.* 24. [11] *Life and Letters.* (April 1930.) [12] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology.* 24. [13] *Letters* (Ed. Forman. 1895). 305.

pulses; and he will have that though we read *fine things*, we *never feel them to the full until we have gone the same steps as the author.*[1] *To read a book in the true sense*, Leslie Stephen gives out,[2] *to read it, that is, not as a critic but in the spirit of enjoyment —is to lay aside for the moment one's own personality and to become a part of the author.* Several in general affirm this, Thoreau among them, who holds that the works of the great poets *have never yet been read . . . for only the great poets can read them.*[3] Crates contends that in order to appreciate the compositions of Heraclitus, a reader must be a cunning swimmer, lest the depth and weight of the learning should drown and swallow him up;[4] and Emerson argues that *one must be a great inventor to read well.*[5] So vast the field, so many mazes and perils, *that unless we be directed by some artist*, George Wither warns,[6] *we shall spend half our age before we can find authors which are worth our reading.*

All those of whom we hear bring evidence in support of these opinions, and the chain would be still more complete if we could add to it the testimonies of those innumerable readers who never speak out, but are content to be of that silent communion which is a most fruitful destiny of literature. There are records of great writers, but great readers who complete the circle of authorship live and die for the greater part in the privacy of their studies. *O quantum eruditorum aut modestia ipsorum aut quies operit ac subtrahit famae!*[7] Sometimes the gifts of reader and writer are united in one person; then we learn something about them, but in the main we depend upon the chance record of some chronicler or gossip woven into the story of his own life or times; the rest is a closed book. Yet, although we are disfurnished of much necessary knowledge, I hope to show in the following chapters that we are not finally ignorant of what readers have felt and thought about their art.

[1] *Letters* (Ed. Forman. 1895). 127. [2] *Hours in a Library*. iv, 54. [3] *Walden*, Scott Lib. 102. [4] *Montaigne*. Ed. Seccombe. iii, Bk. 12. [5] *The American Scholar*. [6] *The Scholar's Purgatory*. [7] Pliny, *Epp.* vii, 25. 'What numbers of learned men does their own modesty or love of repose conceal and withdraw from the notice of the world!' (Melmoth.)

II. METHODS OF FAMOUS BOOKMEN

Dr. Johnson used to advise young people never to be without a book in their pocket, *to be read at bye-times when they had nothing else to do*,[1] claiming that he acquired all his own knowledge that way, except what he had picked up by running about the world with his wits ready to observe and his tongue ready to discuss. *Sir*, he said to Boswell, *in my early years I read very hard. It is a sad reflection, but a true one, that I knew almost as much at eighteen as I do now*.[2] Ill-health favoured him, as it has favoured many another reader; but he read always and at all times, though not continuously in any one book, for all need not be read from beginning to end: *A book may be good for nothing; or there may be only one thing in it worth knowing; are we to read it all through?*[3] *How few are there*, he warned Mrs. Thrale, *of which one ever can possibly arrive at the last page! Was there ever yet anything written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, excepting 'Don Quixote', 'Robinson Crusoe', and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'?*[4] He advised Boswell to have *as many books about* him *as* he *could:* that he *might read upon any subject upon which he had a desire for instruction at the time;*[5] *just as inclination prompted him which alone would do him any good; better go into company than read a set task.*[6] He prescribes five hours a day reading for a young man,[7] but books are no substitute for life: *books without the knowledge of life are useless;*[8] for as Lord Chandos[9] concurs, *though reading do furnish and direct a man's judgement, yet it doth not wholly govern it;* at which few will demur, recalling Plutarch when he confessed that it was not so much by the knowledge of words that he came to understand things as that the experience of things did enable him *to follow the meaning of words.*[10] *Expression is what we want; not knowledge but a vent; men transformed by books become impotent praters;*[11] which, I doubt not,

[1] Mrs. Thrale, in *Johnsonian Miscellanies*. ii, 311. [2] He was then fifty-four. *Life*. Ed. Hill. i, 445. [3] *Ib*. iv, 308. [4] *Johnsonian Miscellanies*. i, 332. [5] *Life*. Hill. iii, 193. [6] Boswell, *Letters*. Tinker. i, 23. [7] *Life*. Hill. i, 428. [8] *Johnsonian Miscellanies*. i, 324. [9] *Horae Subsecivae*. [10] *Plutarch*, Clough. v, 2. [11] Emerson, in Cabot, *Memoir*. i, 293.

Henry Jackson had in mind when he advised Alfred Ollivant to *feed* his *imagination* and not *worry about knowledge*.[1] Every history yields examples.

Some would have it that books are to be taken slowly and piecemeal followed by much pondering,

> Learn to read slowly; all other graces
> Will follow in their proper places.[2]

To this the answer is evident from the words and experiences of adepts in the craft, and it is obvious that, with so many books to be read, and most readers would read many, speed is indispensable. Lubbock compromises by suggesting that it is better, *as regards by far the larger number* of books, to read *quickly, dwelling only on the best and most important passages*.[3] But whatever the experts say, those readers who can will go the pace. Dr. Johnson seized *at once what was valuable in a book, without submitting to the labour of perusing it from beginning to end*.[4] *He read Fielding's 'Amelia' through without stopping*,[5] and was an adept in that branch of the *art of reading* which, Hamerton says, *is to skip judiciously; whole libraries may be skipped*, he says, *in these days*.[6]

Many other authorities, I find, defend skipping, and with reason, for there is no other remedy for those who would keep pace, even in some small measure, with the multiplication of books and the subtraction of time. *There is but one art*, said Stevenson, *to omit;* if he knew how to omit, he would ask *no other knowledge. A man who knew how to omit;* he says, *would make an 'Iliad' of a daily paper;* and, he concludes, that the technique of omission is partial blindness. *Artistic sight is judicious blindness.* From this premise it would follow that selection after the book is chosen, as well as before, is essential. *The book that is wise in spots should be read in spots;*[7] to argue, he says, *that every book worth reading is worth reading straight through* is no better than *insistence upon eating a table-full every time one sits down*

[1] *Henry Jackson, O.M., A Memoir.* Parry. 63. [2] W. Walker, *Art of Reading.* [3] *Pleasures of Life.* i, 62. [4] *Life.* i, 71. [5] *Ib.* iii, 43. [6] *Intellectual Life.* 163. [7] Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 130.

to a meal.[1] Emerson is so conscious of the lack of balance between the number of our books and the fewness of our years, that he would have us read by *proxy, if we had good proxies;* but in all times our skipping has been done for us by anthologists and compilers of *elegant extracts*, though few would uphold such works as final substitutes for complete masterpieces. *In the end the reader finds himself alone: he has to decide for himself, to make up his own mind.*[2] Better skip for yourself, so long as you do not make skipping a habit; but better still master a few masterpieces than let many master you.

Southey *coursed from page to page with a greyhound's speed,* and in a few hours he *classified and arranged everything in a book which it was likely he would ever want;*[3] Napoleon read so fast that a book lasted him scarcely one hour, and at St. Helena, a servant *was kept busy carrying away armfuls of finished books which only a day before had been brought from the shelves;*[4] Sydney Smith galloped through a book *so rapidly*, that his family laughed *when he shut up a thick quarto as his morning's work*, charging him with having *looked at it, not read it.* But on being cross-examined it *was found that he knew all that was worth knowing in it.*[5] Macaulay would take in *at a glance* the whole of a printed page;[6] he read books *faster than other people skimmed them, and skimmed them as fast as any one else could turn the leaves.* One who had watched him said *he seemed to read through the skin;* nor was it speed at the cost of accurate memory, he read and remembered everything from the *most detestable trash that ever consumed ink and paper manufactured for better things*, to the noblest of masterpieces, looking upon misquotation as *a species of minor sacrilege.*

Laurence Sterne was against all such furious reading; he rebukes those of that *vicious taste, which has crept into thousands*, who read *straight forwards more in quest of adventures than of deep erudition and knowledge.* He would have it that the mind should *make wise reflections, draw curious conclusions, as it goes along*, and it was this habitude, he believed, which made Pliny

[1] Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 127. [2] Herbert Read, *Bibliophile's Almanack.* (1928.) 36. [3] Dowden, *Southey.* 108. [4] Ludwig, *Napoleon.* 622. [5] Holland, *Memoir.* i, 112–13. [6] *Life and Letters*, Trevelyan, i, 60–61.

the Younger affirm that *he never read a book so bad, but he drew some profit from it.*[1] Many, and they are wise, seek to read at a moderate pace (as Milton, who read *with selection*, and *meditated*, as Aubrey gives out),[2] absorbing leisurely, and pausing anon to roll a passage over the palate to taste its full flavour, or to fall into a dream upon a name, an incident, a rare description, purple patch or fine phrase; or perchance to share with another the treasures thus discovered, as I dilate in its place. Charles Lamb was of this kind; a *grace*, he urged, should be said before opening some great works, though others are of such *quick interest*, dependent upon *incidents*, that they *are for the eye to glide over only;*[3] of a like mind is Christopher Morley,[4] who has contrived a ceremonial for the reading of Thomas Hardy's *Poems*. *Grace yourself with quiet*, he advises: *take first a long swallow of open air, and have something burning beside you, even if only a candle; fire being element and symbol of sheer life. Then set away every irrelevant mirth or perplexity: be for an hour or so as passively aware as a sprawling dog;* and so with a *smell of earth and sky* and *a humble love of human beings*, you may explore our great modern explorer of the human heart. Montaigne was a persistent but desultory reader. When he met difficulties he did not fret himself, but if after one or two charges at them he failed to extract that pleasure which he stoutly demanded from all books, he circumvented them, for, saith he, *should I earnestly plod upon them, I should lose both time and myself, for I have a skipping wit;* he claimed to do nothing without blitheness and that *an over-obstinate continuation and plodding doth dazzle, dull, and weary the same*, and he would not have his sight thus confounded and diminished.

Last of all to come to our students, who being searchers, enquirers, rather than readers *per se*, use books as the *media* of their craft, not solely to enjoy them. *We professionals*, Henry Jackson exclaimed,[5] *are no better than 'damned scholiasts', too much occupied with unimportant difficulties to be able to enjoy the real thing.* For such as these, *a library is the great intellectual*

[1] *Tristram Shandy*. Bk. I, Chap. xx. [2] *Milton*, Pattison. 18. [3] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.' *Last Essays of Elia*. [4] *Thomas Hardy as a Poet*. [5] *Memoir*, Parry. 199.

stratification in which the literary investigator works; he examines its *external features, or perhaps drives a shaft through its various layers,* passing over this or that *stratum as not immediate to his purpose,* examining the rest with *minute attention* and *microscopic investigation.* For this work they have a special aptitude and develop a precise and particular sense, an instinct like a pointer's for the required fact or passage; *reading with the fingers,* as Basnage said of Bayle, with an *acuteness* which astonishes the unlearned.[1]

III. WHETHER TO READ QUICKLY OR SLOWLY

A book is a miracle of itself, but a wise book is the greatest wonder; *multi Thyrsigeri, pauci Bacchi,* many Bacchantes, but few Bacchuses, whom Swift divides into three classes: *the superficial, the ignorant, and the learned.*[2] Fuller segregates from the rest some books that are only *cursorily to be tasted of;* they are: *voluminous books, that task a man's life to read them over; auxiliary books, only to be repaired to on occasions;* and, *such as are mere pieces of formality.*[3] Others throw a wider net, and would allow the reading at will of any book at any time for which we may have a fancy. Yet (and it is the quintessence and chief glory of the miracle of books that none is so mean as to lack admirers) the Bacchuses must be separated, segregated, sorted out from the Bacchantes, the geese from the swans, the sheep from the goats. But if few out of the millions of books command, or deserve to command, our whole hearts, those few become many in the multitudinous battalions of the printed word, and the best of them eternities in print, for if *it takes millenniums to make a Bible,*[4] it survives through eternity.

The reading of these great books alone, few though they be, is more than enough, did we choose but them, for the shortness of our days, *tempus fugit, et nunquam revertitur; a lifetime*

[1] J. Hill Burton, *Book-Hunter.* 115–16. [2] *Tale of a Tub.* x. [3] *Holy and Profane State.* [4] Emerson, 'Books', *Society and Solitude.* (1870.) 185.

will hardly suffice to know, as they ought to be known, the *great masterpieces of man's genius.* Yet for all this we take them, in the vulgar phrase, *as read,* although, as Frederic Harrison well says,[1] they are never sufficiently read until they become our *daily mental food.* For more to this purpose, read him, but it needs no defence, for, as all agree, good seeketh what is good and dwelleth on it as a dog gnaweth his bone; which is the same as the proverb advises: *Read a page, think an age.* Pliny advises: *Pray remember to select with care the standard authors on each subject, for, as the saying is, 'though we should read much, we should not read many books'.*[2] This is good enough advice in a general comprehension, but we must be curious to avoid a mistake here by accepting it as a final piece, for, as Henry Jackson wisely gives out,[3] *reading slowly, and reading quickly, are distinct arts, both of them valuable.*

A notable instance of varied reading occurs in the life of Dr. Johnson, who in his youth as well as in later days roamed freely and broadly over many book realms. *He might, perhaps,* says Boswell, *have studied more assiduously; but it may be doubted whether such a mind as his was not more enriched by roaming at large in the fields of literature than if it had been confined to any single spot.* Then drawing upon the analogy of mind and body, he suggests that *as the flesh of animals who feed excursively is allowed to have a higher flavour than those who are cooped up,* so there may be *the same difference between men who read as their taste prompts and men who are confined in cells and colleges to stated tasks.*[4]

Quintilian held that all reading should be slow and meditative: *not delivered to the memory in its crude state, but sweetened and worked up by frequent repetition.*[5] *Reading furnishes the mind with materials of knowledge,* saith Locke,[6] *it is thinking makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections; unless we chew them over again they will not give us strength and*

[1] Frederic Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 84. [2] 'Multum legendum esse, non multa.' *Letters.* Trans. Melmoth. Loeb Ed. vii, 9. [3] *Henry Jackson, O.M. A Memoir,* Parry, 47. [4] *Life.* Ed. Hill. i, 57–8. [5] *Inst. Or.* x, 1, 19. [6] *Conduct of the Understanding.*

nourishment; we must meditate in solitude upon what we read as well as upon what we think, for, as Cowley maintains,[1] *cogitation is the thing which distinguishes the Solitude of a God from* that of *a wild Beast.*

Emerson is a prime example of this method, he read a book *for the lustres,* the high-lights, at which he kindled his own thoughts. Books for him were, again, territories wherein he might find jumping-off places for the depths of himself; *his reading was for a touch of suggestion that might help to crystallize the thoughts that were floating within him;*[2] he had a *quick eye* for a phrase, epigram, or aphorism; pounced upon them, made them his own: they help *to make my top spin,* he said, and Cabot thinks that these discoveries were *all he cared to know of a book.*[3] A compatriot of Emerson's in our own time advertises a like method, seeking to establish from his reading *magnetic centres—live spots, which thrust out tentacles of association, and catch and draw to themselves their kind; for,* he says, there are few *joys in reading like the joy of the chase,* a joy which *comes largely through the action of these centres of association in your brain.*[4]

Keats believed[5] that *a man might pass a very pleasant life,* reading *on a certain day a certain Page of full Poesy or distilled Prose: let him wander with it,* he advises, *muse upon it, and reflect upon it, and bring home to it, and prophesy upon it, and dream upon it, until it becomes stale,* which will never be. For to a man of ripe intellect, *any one grand and spiritual passage* may serve as *a starting-post towards all 'the two-and-thirty Palaces'.* 'Tis a *happy voyage of conception, what delicious diligent Indolence! A doze upon a sofa does not hinder it, and a nap upon Clover engenders ethereal finger-pointings—the prattle of a child gives it wings, and the converse of middle-age a strength to beat them—a strain of music conducts to 'an old angle of the Isle', and when the leaves whisper it puts a girdle round the earth.* Nor is this *sparing touch of noble Books irreverent to their Writers,* for *the honours paid by Man to Man are trifles in comparison to the Benefit done*

[1] 'Of Solitude', *Essays.* [2] Cabot, *Memoir of Emerson.* i, 291. [3] *Ib.* i, 288–9. [4] John Livingstone Lowes, *Of Reading Books.* 145. [5] *Letters.* (Ed. Forman. 1895.) 88.

by great Works to the 'Spirit and pulse' of good by their mere passive existence. Man should be content, therefore, *with a few points to tip with the fine Web of his Soul, and weave a tapestry empyrean full of symbols for his spiritual eye, of softness for his spiritual touch, of space for his wandering, of distinctness for his luxury.* This is no other than what is enjoined as a duty by Emerson, in his Journal. His idea is this: Do not give us counters of base coin, but every word of real value, which must *warm* and *invite* the mind to desirable movement: *The essential mark of poetry is that it betrays in every word instant activity of mind;*[1] and Stevenson had the same idea when he declared that *in anything fit to be called by the name of reading, the process itself should be absorbing and voluptuous, we should gloat over a book, be rapt clean out of ourselves, and rise from the perusal, our mind filled with the busiest, kaleidoscopic dance of images.*[2]

I would apply the same test to all writing, which should be as a vehement flame-making fuel to consume the dross it meets in its way, so that it may warm and illuminate the rest. Whereunto may be added the wise testimony of Rabelais,[3] who stoutly recommended the dog-and-bone method to those of his disciples, and other *jolly fools,* who presumed to believe that his *Life of the Great Gargantua and Father Pantagruel* contained nothing but *jests, mockeries, lascivious discourse, and recreative lies.* In order to correct that impression he gives them a parable of a dog with a marrow-bone; *mark,* he says, with what devotion and *circumspectiveness he wards and watcheth it: with what care he keeps it: how fervently he holds it; how prudently he gobbets it: with what affection he breaks it: with what diligence he sucks it.* And all this labour to what end? What reapeth he? Nothing but a little marrow. But it is the marrow of his book Rabelais would have his disciples seek, and when he so much commends them to emulate a dog with a bone, I dare venture the opinion that he speaks for all good books and good readers, for what he advocates for his own books is equally sound for the rest. He is very frequent and confident in this particular: *It becomes you to be wise, to smell, feel and*

[1] Cabot, *Memoir of Emerson.* i, 293. [2] 'Gossip on Romance.'
[3] *Works.* Trans. Urquhart and Motteux. Prologue. Bohn Ed. i, 95.

have in estimation, these fair, godly books, stuffed with high conceptions; and further, you must, by a sedulous lecture, and frequent meditation, break *the bone and suck out the marrow*. In this allegorical sense and in these *Pythagorical Symbols* he proposes to lead his disciples to a well-advised and valiant reading of his own works, and so may all disciples of books and such jolly fools of ease and leisure who may adventure upon the art of reading, *find another kind of taste*, and be thus initiated into the most *glorious doctrines and dreadful mysteries*, for the marrow of a book is not less than these, but more.

IV. OF ASSIMILATION

It is more in this respect of assimilation that books feed soul as well as mind, for the two differ, as our modern science of psychology sets out. Long since it was acclaimed by James Howell[1] that *you must first assume and suck in the matter into your Apprehension*, thus making it your own, one with yourself, which must be retained by disputation (as the Greeks knew and practised), discourse (well known at all times), and meditation (as the monks of old knew and those older orders of Hindustan which are recorded and illustrated in the *Upanishads*, and especially the *Bhagavad-gítá*). Whether these be prophylactics or not in all cases, they are certainly preventatives of the *dyspepsias* common to those whom *sloth seduces* because they are too weak to bear

> The insupportable fatigue of thought,
> And swallowing, therefore, without pause or choice,
> The total grist unsifted, husks and all.[2]

But this only by the way, for those who are chronically constipated by books are past cure: assimilation is essential. *It is not quantity so much that tells, as quality and thoroughness of digestion.*[3]

Literary matter must, therefore, *be well concocted*, Howell continues in the same place, *then it must be agglutinated, and*

[1] *Familiar Letters*. Tenth Ed. 205–6. [2] Cowper, *The Task*. vi.
[3] Quiller-Couch, *Art of Reading*. 14.

converted to nutriment: all this he reduces under two heads, *tenere fideliter*, and *uti faciliter*, two of the happiest properties in a student. Finally *good concoction* requires another act, *call'd the Act of Expulsion, which puts off all that is unsound and noxious:* such *expulsive virtue* is necessary because no science *but is full of such stuff* which by direction of the Tutor and the selection of good books *must be excern'd.* It is the same as Frederic Harrison argues,[1] that *to stuff our minds with what is simply trivial, simply curious*, or of *a low nutritive power*, is *to close our minds to what is solid and enlarging, and spiritually sustaining.* Jeremy Collier has a warning to the same end of books in general. *A man*, he says, *may as well expect to grow stronger by always eating, as wiser by always Reading. Too much overcharges Nature, and turns more into Disease than Nourishment. 'Tis Thought and Digestion which makes Books serviceable, and gives Health and Vigour to the Mind.*[2] Rabelais conjures the student not to confound himself with multiplicity of Authors, two being enough on any Science, *provided they be plenary and orthodox*, which some will consider parsimonious. Philosophy he orders for *substantial food* and Poetry, *your banqueting stuff:* the former having more reality in it than any knowledge: the Philosopher being a wonder-worker, an engineer of the mind, an adventurer in high places who can *fathom the deep, measure Mountains, reach the Stars with a staff, and bless Heavens with a Girdle.*

The greater part of reputable opinion favours this slow and meditative method, yet there are two notable exceptions which I may give in a parenthesis, not as examples for procedure, but to indicate that special conditions require particular considerations. The first is that of Emily Eden,[3] who knew *almost by heart* Boswell's *Johnson*, the *Memoires de Retz*, *Shakespeare*, and a great part of the *Bible*, before she was eleven years of age, *so that there was not a thought left for* her to think upon manners or men, imagination or morals. Her *sentiments*, in later life, she took *by the lumps and in cwts.*, out of *Corinne* and Byron's *Poems;* consoling herself with the

[1] *Choice of Books.* 2. [2] 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays.* ii, 99.
[3] *Miss Eden's Letters.* 107–8.

argument that since she never had thoughts of her own, and if she had they might have been *foolish thoughts*, it was as well to get a supply from reliable sources. The second is that of Charles Lamb. Undisturbed by the experiences of an *ingenious acquaintance* who gave up entertaining himself with the product of the brains of others, greatly to the *improvement of his originality*, he dedicated no inconsiderable amount of his own time to other people's thoughts, and boldly owned that he liked to dream away his life in others' speculations; to lose himself in other men's minds. *When I am not walking, I am reading*, he said; *I cannot sit and think. Books think for me.* He has no repugnances and few reservations. Shaftesbury is *not too genteel for me, nor Jonathan Wild too low. I can read anything which I call a book. I mean some day to attack Caryl on Job, some six folios.*[1]

Friedrich Nietzsche advises concentration, and fearlessly pushes the argument to its logical end, demanding the quantities small, an aphorism, a sentence, an axiom at a time, chewed over and over as a cow chews the cud. The books of the future will be aphoristic and readers masticators of thoughts and ideas. It was his ambition *to say in ten sentences what everyone else says in a whole book,—what everyone else does not say in a whole book; to create things on which time may try its teeth in vain*,[2] for *a good aphorism is too hard for the tooth of time;*[3] to practise *reading as an art*, the quality of *rumination* is essential: *it is necessary*, he says,[4] *to be a cow, and under no circumstances a modern man!* All of which was summed up by Horne Tooke when he said: *Read few books well; multum legere potius quam multa*, read much rather than many things; if they be hard books as well as good, which often happens, so much the better: *difficilia quae pulchra;* as one[5] said of *Tacitus, the second reading will please thee more than the first, the third more than the second.* All of which I would sum up in an injunction to *read between the lines*, for splendid as the surface is, in all

[1] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.' [2] *Twilight of the Idols. Works.* xvi, iii. [3] *Human, all-too-Human. Works.* vii, 83. [4] *Genealogy of Morals. Works.* xiii, 13. [5] 'A. B. To the Reader', in *The End of Nero*, etc. Tacitus, Histories, Bk. iv. Trans. Savile (1591).

great writing, there is more splendour in the deeps. But I could produce such arguments till dark night, so I pass on to the next phase, dropping the hint by the way that reading is not for all, it is not even for the majority who think themselves and would be thought readers. Pass them by. *No one who understands the real thing cares twopence about the dull student, except as a man and a brother. Drink with him, pray with him; don't read with him.*[1]

V. A DIGRESSION OF READING ALOUD

Many are those who have found in books the El Dorado of their dreams, treasure troves, Aladdin's caves, Ultima Thule, Havens of Rest, Utopias, Harbours of Refuge,

> Ay, in the very temple of delight[2]

they have their *sovran shrine:*

> A Book of Verses underneath the Bough,
> A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread—and Thou
> Beside me singing in the Wilderness—
> Oh, Wilderness were Paradise enow![3]

What more delightful than to share our reading with a wise friend or *one better than wise being fair?*[4]

> There, obedient to her praying, did I read aloud the poems
> Made to Tuscan flutes, or instruments more various of our own;
> Read the pastoral parts of Spenser—or the subtle interflowings
> Found in Petrarch's sonnets—here's the book—the leaf is folded down.
>
> Or at times a modern volume,—Wordsworth's solemn-thoughted idyl,
> Howitt's ballad-verse, or Tennyson's enchanted reverie,—
> Or from Browning some 'Pomegranate', which, if cut deep down the middle,
> Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.[5]

[1] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Letters.* i, 265. [2] Keats, 'Ode to Melancholy.' [3] *Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam.* xi. FitzGerald. [4] Sir William Watson, 'Ode in May'. [5] E. B. Browning, *Lady Geraldine's Courtship.*

Thus read Paolo to Francesca:

> If thou art bent to know the primal root,
> From whence our love gat being, I will do,
> As one, who weeps and tells his tale. One day
> For our delight we read of Lancelot,
> How him love thrall'd. Alone we were, and no
> Suspicion near us. Ofttimes by that reading
> Our eyes were drawn together, and the hue
> Fled from our alter'd cheek. But at one point
> Alone we fell. When of that smile we read,
> The wished smile so rapturously kiss'd
> By one so deep in love, then he, who ne'er
> From me shall separate, at once my lips
> All trembling kiss'd. The book and writer both
> Were love's purveyors. In its leaves that day
> We read no more.[1]

Thus also Romeo to Juliet, Abelard to Héloïse, and thus have many other lovers *linked* themselves together with books.

Leigh Hunt's father *completed the conquest* of his mother's heart by reading *the poets and other Classics of England* to her *with his remarkably fine voice, which he modulated with great effect.*[2] It was a custom he continued during his married life, when of an evening, *after brightening the fire and bringing in the coffee*, the poet's mother would listen with *satisfaction* whilst her husband read *Saurin and Barrow to her, with his fine voice and unequivocal enjoyment.*[3] Anne and Alexander Gilchrist, on their honeymoon, read joyously together such *improving* books as Carlyle's *John Sterling*, Herbert Spencer's *Social Studies*, Guizot's *Earth and Man*, Mariotti's *Italy in* 1848, and Mrs. Browning's *Casa Guidi Windows. The reward and crown of the day*, she says, is when her husband thus reads *earnest book* to her, she *working with the needle the while;*[4] and doubtless also we have another expression of love in the task imposed upon John Ruskin by his mother, who forced him to read the *Bible* aloud to her, *every syllable, hard names and all*, from *Genesis* to the *Apocalypse*, about once a year;[5] this faculty was

[1] Dante, *Inferno*. Trans. Cary. Canto v, 121–35. [2] Leigh Hunt, *Autobiography*. World's Classics. 20. [3] *Ib.* 31. [4] A. Gilchrist, *Life and Writings*. 36. [5] *Fors Clavigera.*

acquired early by Stanley Baldwin, for by the time he was nine years of age he had read to an aunt the whole of *Guy Mannering*, *Ivanhoe*, *Red Gauntlet*, *Rob Roy*, *The Pirate*, and *Old Mortality*.[1]

What more delicious than Walter Pater's account of those exquisite boys, Marius and Flavian, reading together the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius in the old granary at *White Nights: the two lads were lounging together over a book, half-buried in a heap of dry corn, in an old granary—the quiet corner to which they had climbed out of the way of their noisier companions on one of their blandest holiday afternoons. They looked round: the western sun smote through the broad chinks of the shutters. How like a picture! and it was precisely the scene described in what they were reading, with just that added poetic touch in the book which made it delightful and select, and, in the actual place, the ray of sunlight transforming the rough grain among the cool brown shadows into heaps of gold. What they were intent on was, indeed, the book of books, the 'golden' book of that day, a gift to Flavian, as was shown by the purple writing on the handsome yellow wrapper, following the title. Flaviane! it said, Flaviane! lege feliciter! Flaviane! Vivas! Floreas! Flaviane! Vivas! Gaudeas! It was perfumed with oil of sandal-wood, and decorated with carved and gilt ivory bosses at the ends of the roller.*[2]

Such instances may be repeated from real life, as when Wordsworth *with a dear friend* walked early, *while the morning light was yellowing the hill tops,*

> By the still borders of the misty lake,
> Repeating favourite verses with one voice,
> Or conning more, as happy as the birds
> That round us chaunted.[3]

Shelley read the whole of *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, and *all the notes*, with *fervid and exulting energy*, to Hogg, in the country outside London, whither they had walked after buying the book, then newly published, at a bookseller's in

[1] 'Books', *Our Inheritance*. 286. [2] *Marius the Epicurean*. i, 40.
[3] Wordsworth, *Prelude*. v, 560–63.

Oxford Street.[1] Swinburne and Meredith enjoyed Fitz-Gerald's *Omar* for the first time, lying together on a *heathery knoll* on Box Hill in Surrey, *reading a stanza alternately, indifferent to the dinner bell, until a prolonged summons reminded* them of *appetite*.[2]

Nor are companions or any human audience always necessary, for there is joy in reading aloud for one's own ears, or for the benefit of those natural objects which are as near and often as dear to us as our own kind, as when the youthful Heine, in the Palace Garden of Düsseldorf, still unpractised in reading, pronounced every word of his favourite *Don Quixote* aloud, so that birds and trees, streams and flowers were able to hear everything;[3] or, more fantastically, when Luke Bird would go of a summer's evening to a little mound *that in May was always covered with cowslips*, with William Law's *Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life* for company. *Mr. Mumby's herd of cows would feed about him*, says my authority,[4] *and sometimes a gentle beast would wander near to him and gaze at him with eyes of affection, and Luke would open his book and inform the creature what heaven was like, and read to it aloud a few pages in a mild manner.* Shelley read aloud on all occasions, with or without audience. *Gebir* was an early obsession: *he would read it aloud, or to himself sometimes, with a tiresome pertinacity*, which once so enraged Hogg that he snatched the book from him and threw it out of the window.[5]

Yet in the face of all this evidence of delight there are some few would have it that *books are not written to be read aloud* (this was asserted by Théophile Gautier), but they need not delay our argument, as so many writers of books refute them by their practice, delighting not only to read their own works but those of others to any willing listeners. Reading aloud needs no defence. There are some even who hold it to be the best way to explore the inwardness of certain works in theology and poetry. Profiat Duran advised Jewish students

[1] T. J. Hogg, *Shelley*. London Library Ed. 179. This was Shelley's introduction to Byron. [2] *George Meredith*, Ellis. 135. [3] *Memoirs*. Ed. Gustav Karpeles, Trans. Cannan. i, 59. [4] T. F. Powys, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine*. 186–7. [5] Hogg, *Shelley*. London Library Ed. 127.

in the Middle Ages to read with both *eye and ear, read aloud*, he said, *do not work in silent poring;*[1] and there are living authorities who would have us catch the rhythm of poetry by the same practice. The Greek for reading means, Lang reminds us, *reading aloud.*[2] *Homer* was read in public places by the Rhapsodists, who wore a blue gown when they recited the *Odyssey* and a red one for the *Iliad.*[3] The Romans so valued the method that their literary works were first read aloud, with a view to selling them, and readings were a recognised form of entertainment at many Greek and Roman feasts. It is not required of me that I should do more than name the reading of scriptures and other pious works which is common to all religions both in public and private, for these exercises of the art, whether enjoyable or not, are ceremonial rather than indulgent.

Pliny made reading aloud one of the regular means of entertaining his guests, on whom he often tried his own works. On one occasion he thus read for *two days successively*, and he held that *to be so confident of your friends' affection that you feel no dread of wearying them, is a sure indication of your own.*[4] In the ancient monasteries, says Merryweather,[5] books were read aloud to the brothers at mealtimes, or to the whole community when otherwise met together, and by this means a genuine communalisation of literature was accomplished. Sir Thomas More introduced the custom into his own home at Chelsea: *He used to have one read daily at his table, which, being ended, he would ask of some of them how they understood such and such a place, and so there grew a friendly communication, recreating all men that were present with some jest or other.*[6] King Alfred the Great was read to by his secretaries at all times, day and night, whenever he had respite from other occupations.

If more evidence from times past is demanded, read it in *Rabelais,*[7] where Grangousier orders Ponocrates to instruct his

[1] Qt. Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages.* 355. [2] Intro. *Pleasures of Bookland.* Shaylor, xiv. [3] Cuperus, *Apotheosis*, in Evelyn, *Memoirs.* ii, 265. [4] *Letters*, Melmoth. Loeb. Ed. viii, 21. [5] *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages.* 12. [6] *Life*, Cresacre More. Ed. Hunter. 103–4. [7] Book I, Chap. xxiii.

son, Gargantua, in a diversity of learning at all times of the day and during all functions. Thus was read unto him, at four o'clock in the morning, some chapter of the Holy Scripture, *whilst they were in rubbing of him;* at dinner *there was read some pleasant history of the war-like actions of former times, until he had taken a glass of wine. Then, if they thought good, they continued reading*, or held discourse together upon the virtue, propriety, efficacy and nature of all things served at the table: bread, wine, water, salt, fleshes, fishes, fruits, herbs, roots, and of their dressing, substantiating their arguments with learned passages from *Pliny*, *Athenaeus*, *Dioscorides*, *Heliodorus*, *Aristotle*, *Aelian*, and others, and in order to be more certain they caused the books of these authors to be brought to the table. Then he betook himself to athletics, running, riding, bathing, tilting, etc., climbing up trees like a squirrel and pulling down great boughs *like another Milo*, running up and down a wall like a rat (by the aid of two well-steeled daggers and two bodkins), casting the dart, throwing the bar, putting the stone, practising the javelin, the boar-spear, and the halbert; afterwards rubbing down, supper, and recapitulation of all he had heard read to him, in the manner of the Pythagoreans, and so to bed, giving thanks to the Creator for His bounty, in which the praise of books and of reading aloud might properly have been included, of which, however, mine author says nothing.

In modern times the practice still has many devotees. Tennyson would entertain his friends by reading to them his own poems, particularly '*Maud*', *in the deep melodious thunder of his voice . . . rather murmuring than mouthing, like the sound of a far sea or of a pine wood.*[1] On the 27th September, 1855, he read this poem to a small party at the Brownings'. Robert and Elizabeth were there, and Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who then made his famous sketch of the Laureate as he read with book close to eyes. *One of the pleasantest things which have happened to us here*, Mrs. Browning tells Mrs. Mitford, *is the coming down to us of the Laureate*, from Freshwater; he *dined with us, smoked with us, opened his heart to us* (*and the second*

[1] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Tennyson: A Memoir.* i, 202 and 194.

bottle of port), *and ended by reading 'Maud' through from end to end, and going away at half-past two in the morning. If I had a heart to spare*, she confesses, *certainly he would have had mine. He is captivating with his frankness, confidingness, and unexampled naïveté! Think of his stopping in 'Maud' every now and then—'There's a wonderful touch! That's very tender! How beautiful that is!' Yes, and it* was *wonderful*, tender, beautiful, and he read *exquisitely in a voice like an organ, rather music than speech.*[1] Writers of books have ever indulged themselves by reading their manuscripts and printed works to select friends; instances are innumerable, but I will do no more than cite one or two, that of Thoreau reading parts of his newly-written *Week on the Concord* to Emerson seated *under an oak on the river bank*, when the listener was *invigorated* by the new work;[2] and that in which Blades went down to Cambridge to read his *Life of Caxton* to the University Librarian Bradshaw. *It was a fine warm afternoon, and after dinner—they dined earlier in those days—they went down, as Bradshaw was fond of doing, into the college garden. A bottle of wine was ordered out, and there and then, without moving from the place, Mr. Blades read the whole of the historical portion of the book to his willing listener, who frequently interposed criticisms and suggestions of the most useful kind.*[3] And I doubt not that writers enjoy (sometimes) hearing their own works read to them, as Dr. Johnson must have done on that occasion when his poem, *London*, was produced by Boswell during a jaunt to Greenwich, who read aloud *with enthusiasm* the lines on that *favourite scene.*[4]

Henry Crabb Robinson journeyed from London to Witham for the pleasure of reading *The Excursion* (then a new book) to Mrs. W. Pattison, to whom he also read the reviews of the poem in the *Eclectic* and the *Edinburgh;*[5] Robert Southey counselled Grosvenor Bedford not only to buy Wordsworth's *Lyrical Ballads* but to read *aloud* the poems entitled *The Brothers* and *Michael*,[6] presumably to himself, for so also may the true flavour of poems be tested. Charles

[1] *Letters.* [2] Cabot, *Memoir of Emerson*, i, 284. [3] Prothero, *Memoir of Bradshaw.* 73–4. [4] Life, i, 460. [5] *Diary.* i, 245. [6] *Letters.* (World's Classics.) 48.

Dickens, on the other hand, wore himself out reading his novels to vast audiences; he told Miss Hogarth (in a letter from Dublin, 25.8.1858) that *everybody* was at *Little Dombey*, so great the crowd that people had to be *shaken into their seats: we could stay here a week with that one reading, and fill the place every night;* but more like a theatrical performance, this, than a reading.

Not so those quiet hours Dorothy Wordsworth devoted to reading to her brother, the poet, as on that occasion when he was tired out with working at his poem *The Pedlar;* they *made up a good fire after dinner, and William brought his mattress out, and lay down upon the floor,* and she read the *Life of Ben Jonson* to him;[1] or Mrs. Boyle's reading of *Tom Brown's Schooldays* to Barberina, Lady Grey;[2] or Lady Louisa Stuart reading *Coleridge* at Richmond to her family, or *Ivanhoe: they are making me read 'Ivanhoe' to them in the evening; in my mind few books gain so much as those* (meaning the *Waverley Novels*) *by being read aloud;* and Miss Berry (Horace Walpole's friend) was equally happy reading aloud or being read to by others; she entertained her friends with such diverse works as *Marmion*, Gell's *Ithaca*, and *Mr. Fox's Historical Works, in the beautiful large-paper copy which Robert Ferguson had given her;* and Lord Rosslyn read *Lara, Lord Byron's new tale,* on 20th August, 1814, and on an evening in the same year she heard the poet Campbell read a discourse on English poetry at Madame de Stael's.[3]

Reading aloud in the old days was one of the methods by which the tedium of long winters was combated. Madame de Sévigné was never happier than when her son Charles helped to while away the long evenings at Les Rochers by reading aloud some comedy of Molière's, or some pamphlet of Pascal's, or the latest books from Paris.[4] Miss Catherine Talbot writes, from Cuddesden, to her friend the 'learned' Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, that they have *happily fixed in a scheme of reading through all Sir Richard Steele's papers,* which would last them as long as they stayed in the country, and although

[1] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth.* 89. [2] *A Family Chronicle.* 292. [3] *Miss Berry's Journal.* Lewis. [4] *Letters.* i, xxxiii.

they were familiar with these works, *this orderly and sociable way of reading gives novelty to them;* they were read thus every day *after breakfast and supper, ten o'clock is the hour that generally concludes them at both those times;*[1] she read Dr. Young's *Night Thoughts* to her aunt,[2] and when *Clarissa* appeared she and her family *lived quite happy the whole* time they were reading it, and by reading only *en famille*, they made that time last as long as they could, reading at *set hours* and the rest of the day talking of it.[3] Mrs. Hemans had *the delightful talent of reading aloud well*, for the entertainment of her family circle, and *she could continue this even as she walked.*[4] Mark Pattison records[5] that his father, *who read well, and liked doing so*, took *Paradise Lost* one winter for his family reading. Reading aloud was practised in the family of the poet, William Allingham, who remembers how his Aunt Maryanne, a *voracious novel-reader*, would read the *Waverley Novels* on a winter's evening at Ballyshannon: *my Grandmother in her arm-chair by the fire, with close cap, knitting incessantly, her snuff-box on a little table, an old cat called 'Norway' snoozing on the hearthrug and sometimes jumping into her lap; Aunt Bess also knitting, grave and silent;* and himself with paper and pencil, drawing, and listening to the story at the same time.[6]

Sir John Herschel records how the blacksmith of a certain village would sit on his anvil of an evening reading *Pamela* to the villagers, and that when *the happy turn of fortune arrived, which brings the hero and heroine together, and sets them living long and happily according to the most approved rules, the congregation were so delighted as to raise a great shout, and procuring the church keys, actually set the parish bells ringing.* Friedrich Nietzsche would read to his sister and their intimate friends; once he read scenes from *Faust* to a party of twelve friends on the summit of Mt. Brè, above the lake of Lugano, *while our eyes wandered over the magnificent spring landscape, and grew intoxicated with the overflowing riches of the world;*[7] Henry

[1] Mrs. Elizabeth Carter, *Letters.* Pennington. i, 33. [2] *Ib.* 217. [3] *Ib.* 204. [4] *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.* Chorley. i, 13. [5] *Memoirs.* 11. [6] *William Allingham: A Diary.* 27. [7] Frau Forster-Nietzsche, *The Young Nietzsche.* 245.

Bradshaw was devoted to *Tennyson* during his Eton days, and when a new volume came out he would take it home with him on his holidays and *read it aloud to his sisters;*[1] and he liked to read *Dickens* to his friends at Cambridge;[2] Edward Fitz-Gerald's sisters read Lyell's *Geology* to him of an evening, when he was a young man, and when he was old and his sight growing dim, he would hire a village boy to read to him every evening, who stumbled at *every third word*, and got tired, so that he had to be renovated with cake and sweet wine.[3] Another instance of youth reading to their elders is that of Archdeacon Groome, who, as *a very small boy, read 'Gil Blas' to the cook Lois Dowsing, and the sweetheart she never married, a strapping sergeant of the Guards, who had fought at Waterloo.*[4] Tolstoy *read aloud very well*, and would often read *something he had just written* to his family, or *something from the works of other writers.*[5] I could go on adding to my instances without augmenting my thesis, that reading aloud is a proper practice, and on this account 'tis as clear and reasonable in itself as solitary and silent reading; and those that speak other things about it seem to me to talk at random, and perfectly without book.

There are no written laws for this gentle and sociable art, but some that are unwritten and proper to be observed; the most acceptable being that which draws us towards reading which is unaffected and unposed. Choice of matter must also be considered, but here individual taste must remain the only reliable law-giver. Charles Lamb gives out that some poets, *Milton* and *Shakespeare* for instance, demand reading aloud *to yourself, or (as it chances) to some single person listening: more than one*, he adds, *and it degenerates into an audience;* but books of *quick interest, that hurry on for incidents*, such as novels, even of the better sort, are for the eye to slide over, not the voice, and *a newspaper read out is intolerable.*[6] Each one of his strictures could be hotly contested and his tastes are opposed by

[1] Prothero, *Memoir of Bradshaw*. 14. [2] *Ib.* 114. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 40, 320. [4] Francis Hindes Groom, *Two Suffolk Friends*. 12. [5] *Life*. Maude. i, 361. [6] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.'

many examples in this digression. I shall not add further differences, for such problems settle themselves; but if the matter of choice is free, the manner is fixed. It must be unadorned by any pose or pretence. In reading aloud you are greatly privileged, first to consort with all that is noble and beautiful in thought and imagination, and then to give it forth again. You adventure among masterpieces and spread the news of your discoveries. No news better worth the spreading; few things better worth sharing, for its loveliness endureth for ever. But you must read with reverence, for you are the interpreter of genius; you add your mind to his; your vision to his; your voice to his: you become spokesman for him and intermediary. *The art*, said Dr. Johnson, *is to read strong, though low*.[1] Let, therefore, no voice of brass, insolence of mind, or arrogance of heart, cheapen or impede this traffic. Let your reading aloud be good talk, and shun elocution and histrionics as you would the plague.

[1] *Life*. iv, 207.

PART V

OF BOOKFELLOWSHIP

I. THEY ARE THE BEST COMPANY

The possession of no good can be wholly delightful without a companion: *Fellowship is life, lack of fellowship is death;*[1] and to all those who dote for select company, books are propitious, because they are friends whom we can associate with our *choicest thoughts.*[2] There are three kinds of companions, Sir John Davys claims (after a French writer): *men, women and books*, and the greatest of these is books, as the poet maintains,

> the women we deem that he chose for their looks,
> And the men for their cellars: the books were his friends:
> 'Man delights me not', often, 'nor woman', but books
> Are the best of good comrades in loneliest nooks.[3]

F. D. Maurice holds that the best books are friends and the best use of books to discover their friendship. The origin of every book that *is* a book is a man of genius who wants to share his genius with a reader: *he may be writing about a great many things;* but it is *a man who writes; and when you get acquainted with that man, you get acquainted with the book*, and, as he follows it, the work is then no more *a collection of letters and leaves*, it is *a friend;*[4] and not only a friend but a rare friend, for, said Dr. Johnson,[5] *the best part of every author is in general to be found in his* book:

> This, Cicero, is thy heart;
> I hear it beating through each purple line.
> This is thyself, Anacreon—yet thou art
> Wreathed, as in Athens, with the Cnidian vine.

[1] William Morris, *Dream of John Ball.* 29. [2] Thoreau, *Week on the Concord.* Scott Lib. 240. [3] Andrew Lang, in Gleeson White's *Book-Song.* 63. [4] F. D. Maurice, *Friendship of Books.* 3. [5] *Johnsonian Miscellanies.* Hill. ii, 310.

> I ope thy pages, Milton, and, behold,
> Thy spirit meets me in the haunted ground! . . .
> These *are* yourselves—your life of life! The Wise
> (Minstrel or Sage) *out* of their books are clay; . . . .
> Angels—that, side by side, upon our way,
> Walk with and warn us.[1]

This sense of companionship which we receive from our love of books is common to all bibliophiles. It is cousin-german to bibliomania, a concomitant condition, goes hand in hand with it, and is, by the testimony of all bookfolk, cause and symptom both; but it is here set forth as a condition of book-love in its essence, as love of letters, their companionship, friendliness, power to succour and console in solitude, either enforced or voluntary.

Enforced solitariness is commonly seen in Monks, Friars, Anchorites, that by their order and course of life must abandon all company, society of other men, and betake themselves to a private cell. Monastic life compels them, as Merryweather points out,[2] to *seek the sweet yet silent companionship* of friendly books, the willing companions *of everyone doomed to lonely hours and dismal solitude:*

> I envy them, those monks of old;
> Their books they read, and their beads they told.[3]

Students in voluntary exile joyously apostrophise books, with Richard de Bury, as celestial gifts of divine liberality, *descending from the Father of Light to raise up the rational soul even to heaven!*[4] Such are those, some of them, who *find shelter among books.*[5] I include also among them the sick of body or soul, which I have dilated upon; but all, whether the companionship be cause or effect, enforced or voluntary, come to love books for themselves, they translate them by affection, and by a genial animism make them more real, more alive than any other corporeal thing, entering into themselves, becoming by the alchemy of association at one with their dearest intimacies.

[1] Bulwer Lytton, Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology.* 23. [2] *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages.* 9. [3] G. P. R. James, *The Monks of Old.* [4] *Philobiblon.* Chap. i. [5] Charles Lamb, 'Poor Relations', *Last Essays of Elia.*

If I were blind, said Sylvestre de Sarcy, *I would still take pleasure in holding a beautiful book:*

> But whether it be worth or looks
> We gently love or strongly,
> Such virtue doth reside in books
> We scarce can love them wrongly.[1]

No better acquaintances, no truer friends, and *like living friends they have their voices and physiognomies.*[2] Nothing in the world so accessible, so eager for friendship. *They advise us and talk with us and treat us with a bright and witty familiarity; nor does each ingratiate itself by its own merit alone but suggests the names of more,* one introduces Petrarch to *Marcus Varro, De Officiis* sends him to *Ennius,* and the *Tusculan Disputations* imbues him with a love of *Terence,* and fourteen more like instances, for he regarded books not as *musty parchments,* but as friends with whom, saith Tatham,[3] he could *freely converse under his own roof;* they were *men, not shadows;* books were no mere *storehouses of words and facts,* but the embodiment of *living writers.* So, nearer our time, Madame de Sévigné was reincarnate out of her *Letters* for Edward FitzGerald, the *companion* of his old age: *quite alive in the Room with* him;[4] he is astonished to find that when he looks into *Shakespeare* it is *not a Book, but People,* he says,[5] *talking all round me;* and Dr. Furnivall *lived on terms of personal friendship* with *Chaucer.*[6] They are thus our very familiars, we are on the best of terms with them, we enter into their lives and occupations,

> With Wordsworth paddle Rydal Mere,
> Taste rugged Elliott's home-brewed beer,
> And with the ears of Rogers at fourscore,
> Hear Garrick's buskined tread and Walpole's wit
> once more.[7]

Many know the characters in *Shakespeare, Sterne, Dickens* and *Thackeray* better than their own near friends. The people

[1] Cosmo Monkhouse, 'De Libris', in *Book-Song.* 91. [2] A. Bronson Alcott, *Concord Days.* [3] *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 36. [4] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 383. [5] *More Letters.* 53–4. [6] Alois Brandl, in Monro, *F. J. Furnivall.* 11. [7] Whittier, 'A Magnate in the Realm of Books'.

of Jane Austen's novels, the Dashwoods and Bennets, the Bertrams and Woodhouses, the Thorpes and Musgroves, *have been admitted as familiar guests to the firesides of many families*, where they are known *as individually and intimately as if they were living neighbours.*[1]

Even when they have served their turn as *tools* they remain *companions*. Sir Edmund Gosse looked upon his library as *the workshop* as well as the *playground of a man of letters; these books*, he says, *have been my tools and are still my companions.*[2] Mark Rutherford advised his friend Mrs. Colenutt to buy Ibsen's *Rosmersholm* and *keep it as a companion.*[3] To meet with the *Meditations* of Marcus Aurelius, Robert Louis Stevenson testifies,[4] is to touch a *royal hand*, to look into *brave eyes*, to make *a noble friend. Learned authors*, Joseph Hall attests in his *letter* to Lord Denny, are the *most harmless*, the *sweetest companions*, a scholar lives in *Heaven*, for in one small room he can converse with *all the glorious martyrs and fathers*, can single out at pleasure: *sententious Tertullian, or grave Cyprian, or resolute Hierome, or flowing Chrysostome, or divine Ambrose, or devout Bernard, or* (*who alone is all these*) *heavenly Augustine*, talk with them, hear their wise and holy counsels, verdicts, resolutions, *yea*, he saith, (*to rise higher*) *with courtly Esay, learned Paul, all their fellow-prophets, apostles; yet more, like another Moses*, to talk with God Himself; and if there be any that think this riding too high, they may rise with Barry Cornwall as high at least as the angelic hosts, when he called his books *angels and seraphim;*[5] to both of which I have brought support already in my first chapter, for many bibliophiles are, and have been, of the same mind, particularly in those times when it was the height of appreciation to attribute all good things to the inspiration of God and His Angels, and if this which I have said will not suffice, see more in the *Philobiblon* of our devout Richard de Bury, Bishop of Durham, or William Ellery Channing, who pines for no other intellectual companionship, if, he says, *Milton will cross my*

[1] *Memoir of Jane Austen*, Austen-Leigh. 2. [2] *The Library of Edmund Gosse*. Cox. xxii. [3] *Letters to Three Friends*. 48. [4] 'The Influence of Books', *Art of Writing*. 84. [5] *Autobiographical Fragment*.

threshold to sing to me of Paradise; and Shakespeare open to me the world of imagination and the workings of the human heart; and Franklin enrich me with his practical wisdom.[1]

II. CONVERSING WITH BOOKS

When Oliver Goldsmith read an excellent book it was as if he had *gained a new friend*, and when he read a book over again it was like *meeting with an old one;*[2] *Béranger* and Eugene Field were *old cronies;*[3] *a pocket edition of Plato, of Plutarch, of Euripides, or of the Septuagint, was* Shelley's *ordinary companion.*[4] They are indeed *silent, eloquent companions;*[5] and, as in the poet, all the better for being

> Friends, not adopted with a schoolboy's haste,
> But chosen with a nice discerning taste.[6]

Bookmen would be inseparable from their books: *Walter Scott* was Cory's *lost childhood*, his *first great friend: I long for him*, he said,[7] *and hate the death that parts us.* Petrarch was desolate when removed from his comrade-books. Once this was brought about through the intervention of his friend Philippe de Cabassoles, Bishop of Cavaillon, who thought the poet was destroying his health by over-study; but it was a mistaken treatment, for Petrarch was immediately still more seriously distressed. The first day of absence from his books passed wearily, *seeming longer than a year;* on the second he had *a headache from morning till night*, and on the third he began to feel *symptoms of fever;* the good Bishop thereupon restored the keys to the book-room and Petrarch on the instant recovered.[8]

Many have given out that one of the precious qualities of this companionship is that it is silent; but there is as much evidence that, though silent, books are not dumb, that they hail their lovers and are ever ready to talk with them. Of an even-

[1] Qt. Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 20. [2] *Citizen of the World.* lxxv. [3] Eugene Field, *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* 103. [4] Hogg, *Shelley.* London Lib. Ed. 84. [5] Washington Irving, Qt. *Book-Lover's Enchiridion.* 196. [6] Cowper, *Retirement.* [7] *Letters and Journals.* 223. [8] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* i, 362–77.

ing Machiavelli would go into his study and thus pass into *the antique courts of ancient men* to be *welcomed lovingly by them.* Such tender greeting encouraged him to speak with them without show, to learn the history and the motive of their lives, and these dead responded by reason of a common humanity; *for hours together*, he adds, *the miseries of life no longer annoy me, for I have transferred myself to those with whom I converse.*[1] Petrarch also, Tatham gives out,[2] loved to converse with his books: Cicero, Seneca and Augustine were *individuals in whom he discerned the reflection of his own personality*, and, as he read their works, *he held long and animated dialogues with them*, which he sometimes recorded on the margins of his books, and sometimes he talked to them in elaborate epistles, as in his *Letters to Dead Authors.* So also, as John Fletcher relates it, *the place that does contain my books, the best companions, is to me a glorious court*, wherein he *conversed* with the sages and philosophers of olden days; for Robert Southey,

> My never-failing friends are they,
> With whom I converse day by day;[3]

Cowley advertises that this is *the best and noblest conversation;*[4] and when old age comes, books are still willing to talk with us: *I have one more reason for reading*, said Dr. Johnson, *that Time has, by taking away my companions, left me less opportunity for conversation;*[5] thus our greatest talker found peace, when he could no longer talk with his mortal peers.

III. FRIENDS THAT CHANGE NOT YET ARE EVER NEW

Petrarch found[6] books friends whose society was *always delightful;* they are of all ages and countries, distinguished in affairs, in sciences, knowledge, easy to live with, they come at our call and retire when we desire them; *no distracting element*

[1] *Opere di Machiavelli.* 1813. v, 8. [2] *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 238. [3] 'My days among the dead are passed.' [4] *Pindaric Ode.* [5] Croker's *Boswell.* 727. Qt. Hill. *Life.* iv. *n.* 218. [6] Verse Letter to Bishop of Lopez. Qt. Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 67.

about a book: leave it alone and it will leave you alone.[1] Books are never out of humour; never envious or jealous; they answer all questions with readiness; they reveal the secrets of Nature, the events of the past; they teach us how to live and how to die; they dispel melancholy by their mirth, and amuse by their wit; they prepare the soul to suffer everything and desire nothing; they introduce us to ourselves; they uphold the downcast, and restrain the conceited by warning that days are swift and life short; and all they ask in return is a quiet corner where they may be safe from the attacks of their enemies. *To divert at any time a troublesome fancy*, Fuller advises, *run to thy books; they always receive thee with the same kindness.*[2]

Pliny[3] also found his joy and solace in books, *no gladness they cannot increase, no sorrow they cannot lessen;* he flew to them as the *sole alleviators of his fears:* they helped him to understand his troubles better, his fears to bear more patiently; and Montaigne, in his *Tower of Learning*, is tranquilly disposed towards them, as all know: *commerce of Books* everywhere assisted him: *it comforts me in age, and solaceth me in solitariness: it easeth me of the burden of wearysome sloth: and at all times rids me of tedious companies.*[4]

> But what strange art, what magic can dispose
> The troubled mind to change its native woes?
> Or lead us willing from ourselves, to see
> Others more wretched or more undone than we?
> This, books can do; nor this alone; they give
> New views to life, and teach us how to live;
> They soothe the griev'd, the stubborn they chastise,
> Fools they admonish and confirm the wise:
> Their aid they yield to all; they never shun
> The man of sorrow, nor the wretch undone:
> Unlike the hard, the selfish, and the proud,
> They fly not sullen from the suppliant crowd;
> Nor tell to various people various things,
> But show to subjects what they show to kings.[5]

When Laurence Sterne's neighbours thought him alone he

[1] F. Madan, *Ideal Bodleian.* 33. [2] 'Of Books.' *The Holy State.* [3] *Letters.* viii, 19. [4] *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 52. [5] Crabbe, *The Library.*

was *in company with more than five hundred mutes—each of whom, at my pleasure, communicates his ideas to me by dumb signs—quite as intelligibly as any person living can do by uttering words;* they keep their distance as he directs, or come to him when he pleases; he handles fifty of them in an evening as he likes, they never complain of ill-usage, and take no offence when dismissed, *though ever so abruptly;* such *convenience*, he maintains, *is not to be enjoyed—no such liberty to be taken—with the living.*[1] Jeremy Collier confirms this in a memorable essay,[2] where he argues that in *conversing with Books* we may not only choose our company but *disengage without Ceremony or Exception*, and further, we are free from the *Formalities of Custom and Respect*, we *need not undergo the Penance of a dull Story from a Fop of Figure;* but may *shake off the Haughty, the Impertinent, and the Vain, at Pleasure.* Besides all this, *Authors, like Women, commonly Dress when they make a visit.* They polish up their thoughts *and exert the Force of their Understandings* out of *Respect to themselves*, far more than they would in *ordinary Conversation*, thus giving the reader the *Spirit* and *Essence* in *a narrow Compass*, which was *drawn off from a much larger Proportion of Time, Labour, and Expence.* He is *like an Heir: born rather than made Rich*, inheriting *a Stock of Sense, with little or no trouble of his own.*

Well may the poet[3] boast,

> All round the room my silent servants wait,
> My friends in every season;

and well may another claim that they are *the most mannerly of companions, accessible at all times, in all moods, frankly declaring the author's mind, without offence.*[4] We have now less cause to wonder that Charles Lamb's poor student *found shelter among books, which insult not; and studies, that ask no questions of a youth's finances.*[5] It is this coyness, this well-mannered diffidence, which makes them supreme for companionship, for they are as guiltless of a desire to obtrude as they are insensitive to neglect. Emerson *lived among his books and was never comfortable away*

[1] *Works.* (1819.) iv, 45. [2] 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays.* ii, 98. [3] Barry Cornwall, *Autobiographical Fragment.* [4] A. Bronson Alcott, *Concord Days.* [5] 'Poor Relations', *Last Essays of Elia.*

from them, yet, says Cabot,[1] *they did not much enter into his life; they were pleasant companions, but not counsellors—hardly even intimates;* but his books were not chagrined, they were content to serve and wait for an intimacy, and remain still faithful if it never came:

> A good book is a friend; the best of friends,
> That cannot be estranged or take offence
> Howe'er neglected, but returns at will
> With the old friendship.[2]

To *this warm and undying feeling of the friendliness of books,*[3] I could go on multiplying tributes *ad infinitum,* but will do no more than give you a handful of commendations gathered from various reliable authorities in support of this pleasant theme: books are *the best solitary company in the world;*[4] *cheering and soothing companions in solitude, illness and affliction;*[5] *he that loveth a book will never want a faithful friend;*[6] *they wind into the heart;*[7] they are *sweet unreproaching companions to the miserable;*[8] and *when all that is worldly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value;* when *friends grow cold,* books *only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days,* cheer with *true friendship,* which never *deceived hope nor deserted sorrow;*[9] for they *nourish youth; delight old age; adorn prosperity; afford a refuge and solace in adversity; forming our delights at home; anything but hindrances abroad; they are our nightly associates; our indoor and out-of-door companions.*[10]

The best of them all, and most rational, have said in this kind; but neither he, they, nor any one of them, gives his reader, to my judgement, that satisfaction which he ought, unless he claims, as Andrew Lang does,[11] that *a book is a friend whose face is constantly changing,* but ever remaining a friend, and all the more because the change is in us, to whom the book is a mirror, reflecting our moods, hopes, joys, and sorrows, *dies diem docet,* one day teacheth another, and books are the

[1] *Memoir of Emerson.* i, 292. [2] W. J. Linton, in *Book-Song.* 80. [3] Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 17. [4] Sir W. Waller, *Divine Meditations.* [5] W. E. Channing, *Self-Culture.* [6] Isaac Barrow, *On Industry.* [7] Hazlitt, *Lectures on Dramatic Literature.* [8] Goldsmith, *Vicar of Wakefield.* [9] Washington Irving, *The Sketch Book.* [10] Cicero, *Pro Archia.* Qt. Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* ii, 957. [11] *The Library.* Second Ed. 15.

friendly legionaries in this great advance; it is every man as he likes; so many men, so many minds; so many days, so many moods, and by the help of books, all tending to good purpose, though each is different, after its own manner.

It will be a great delight to him *in the next world,* Robert Southey confesses, to revisit his books among the lakes of Cumberland, *and to tell them what excellent company* he found them, for *I exist more among the dead than the living, and think more about them, perhaps feel more about them. Coleridge is gone to Devonshire,* he tells G. C. Bedford, *and I was going to say I am alone, but the sight of Shakespeare, and Spenser, Milton, and the Bible, on my table, and Castanheda, and Barros, and Osorio at my elbow, tell me I am in the best of all possible company. What were days without such fellowship?* asks A. B. Alcott, and he answers that we are *alone in the world without it.*[1]

> Ye dear companions of my silent hours;[2]

I call myself a solitary, but sometimes I think I misapply the term. No man sees more company than I do. I travel with mightier cohorts around me than ever did Timour or Genghis Khan on their fiery marches.[3]

There is room for all; those who know and enjoy the companionship of the patricians of intellect and imagination by conversation with them and those who know by outward contact, for many are joyful merely in rubbing shoulders with nobility, but

> While you converse with lords and dukes,
> I have their betters here—my books.[4]

Others are fain not only to be in the great tradition, but to be of it by right of possession, as Frederick Locker when he confessed, *I seem to be nearer to Shakespeare when I have his volume of 'Sonnets' (edition* 1609) *open before me,*[5] as well he may; for the rest, everyone to his taste, and estate, for as Oliver Wendell Holmes rightly gave out, they are well-mannered companions,

[1] *Tablets.* Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology.* 6. [2] Leigh Hunt. [3] Alexander Smith, *Dreamthorp.* 249. [4] Thomas Sheridan. [5] *My Confidences.* 189.

Each knows his place, and each may claim his part
In some quaint corner of his master's heart.[1]

Every reader who holds a book in his hand is free of the inmost minds of men past and present; their lives both within and without the pale of their uttered thoughts are unveiled to him; he needs no introduction to the greatest.[2]

He may hear the voice of Demosthenes, Homer, or *Roman Virgil*,

Wielder of the stateliest measure ever moulded
by the lips of man.[3]

He may hear Burke perorate at Westminster, Johnson dogmatise in Fleet Street, Socrates argue, Rabelais laugh, Augustine confess, Swift scoff, Pepys gossip, Donne preach, Carlyle scold, Ruskin lecture, Taylor pray, Scott yarn, Herrick sing, Whitman sound his *barbaric yawp*,[4] Shelley *beat in the void his luminous wings in vain*,[5]

Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,
Warble his native wood-notes wild.[6]

And as the chattering of the world dies down books will sing to him unheard melodies and whisper eloquence *born of the very sigh that silence heaves;*[7] *Quando omnes loquuntur et deliberant, optimum a mutis et mortuis est consilium. Homines quoque si taceant, vocem invenient libri, et quae nemo dicit, prudens suggerit antiquitas:*[8] When all men talk and deliberate, the best counsel is from the silent dead; if men are silent, then books will find a voice; what no one says, the wisdom of the ages will suggest; and even voluble love is best heard in the voice of silence,

O let my books be then the eloquence
And dumb presagers of my speaking breast;
Who plead for love, and look for recompense,
More than the tongue that more hath more expressed.
O learn to read what silent love hath writ:
To hear with eyes belongs to love's fine wit.[9]

[1] 'The Study.' [2] Frederic Harrison, *Choice of Books*. 7. [3] Tennyson, 'To Virgil'. [4] 'Song of Myself', *Leaves of Grass*. 78. [5] Matthew Arnold, 'Shelley'. *Essays in Criticism*. [6] Milton, *L'Allegro*. [7] Keats, 'I stood tip-toe'. [8] Inscription Guelferbylanae Bibliothecae. [9] Shakespeare, *Sonnets*. xxiii.

PART VI

OF THE READING OF BOOKS

I. READING WITH PURPOSE

In every age there are high-minded mentors who never tire of preaching that books are not lightly to be approached without an earnest purpose: *the golden key to knowledge, a key that will only fit its own proper doors, is purpose;*[1] *every book that we take up without a purpose is an opportunity lost of taking up a book with a purpose;*[2] *let your reading have a practical bearing,* commands Fénelon, *let it tend to the correction of your faults; reading for reading's sake is one of the worst and commonest and most unwholesome habits.*[3] They that thus scorn are kith and kin to those fanatics of the past (and sometimes even of the present) who see in pleasures only the seductions of the Devil.

Addison is opposed to solitary and self-absorbed studies; book knowledge to a *recluse man* is as a *lantern* hiding him who carries it and serving only to pass him through *secret and gloomy paths of his own;* but *it is a torch in the hand of one who is willing and able to show those who are bewildered the way which leads to prosperity and welfare.*[4] Brother Agnellus of Pisa, the first Franciscan Missionary to Oxford, found the Monks in the library of the school he had set up *bestowing their time on frivolous learning,* to so great an extent, he thought, as to lead them to debate the existence of God, which he one day found them doing. *Woe is me! Woe is me!* he burst forth, *the simple brethren are entering heaven, and the learned ones are debating if there be one;* and he made a donation of £10 sterling to buy a copy of the *Decretals,* that the Friars might study it and be weaned from their *frivolities.*[5]

[1] Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 130. [2] Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 15. [3] *Ib.* 6. [4] *Spectator.* [5] Elton, *Great Book-Collectors.* 33.

Sir Walter Scott's old librarian, Dominie Sampson, in *Guy Mannering*, though no monk, had a monastic fear of frivolous literature, and he tossed indignantly aside even *belles lettres*, poems, plays and memoirs, as belonging to that forbidden class. *Whether novels, or poetry, or history be read*, says John Ruskin, *they should be chosen not for what is* out *of them, but for what is* in *them;* and Bulwer-Lytton asserts that more is gotten from one book *on which the thought settles for a definite end in knowledge* than from whole libraries *skimmed over by the wandering eye;* which is confirmed by Miss Eden, who strove to bring herself to *a high state of cultivation by studying fifteen books at a time; no saying*, she admits, *how much I shall read, or how little I shall remember.*[1] She was no better off in the end than young Waverley in Scott's romance, who *drove through the sea of books like a vessel without pilot or rudder.* He that reads many books must *compare one opinion or one style*, argues Dr. Johnson, *must distinguish, reject, and prefer.* Books for such folks must be uplifting, serious, purposeful in their morality; they must be good books, great books, that could be defended against their depreciators:

> Books that purify the thought,
> Spirits of the learned dead,
> Teachers of the little taught,
> Comforters when friends are fled.[2]

II. BOOKS MORALLY APPROACHED

Some distinguish between good and bad books; others even give out that books are profane or vulgar, for gentle or for simple. Sir Richard Colt Hoare told John Nichols that he had *a great treat in Dibdin's 'Tour'*, which was *quite a Gentleman's Book.* This *pregnant brevity* Dibdin approved as the warmest eulogy of his book.[3] Others will have that there are week-day books and Sunday books. When Dibdin[4] was for a time

[1] *Miss Eden's Letters.* 108–9. [2] William Barnes. [3] *Reminiscences.* ii, 679. [4] *Ib.* 860.

incapable of attending to his duty as Vicar of St. Mary's, Bryanston Square, he *cast about* to suit his reading to the *day*, and conceived the idea of a portable *Sunday library*, composed of *a collection of Discourses by eminent Churchmen*. Of this type are those who believe that there are secular and sacred books, one class ordained by circumstance and the other by God Himself. Henry Crabb Robinson resolved to devote his Sundays to books *of a religious character;*[1] William Cory *dragged* himself through *Paradise Lost* because he *thought it a good thing to do on Sunday afternoons;*[2] Henry Bradshaw also set about *Paradise Lost* for his Sunday reading, and was *charmed with the first two books;*[3] and James Howell exhorts his student cousin not to forget *unicum necessarium: on Sundays and Holidays let Divinity be the sole object of your speculation, in comparison whereof all other knowledge is but Cobweb-learning; prae qua quisquiliae caetera.*[4] But this disposition is long since outmoded, and there is no such reluctancy among modern readers, who read now on Sundays what they like, and to so little hurt that younger folk wonder at that superstition which made Sunday hideous to our forbears. Lord Macaulay, who in one year read a Greek play every Sunday,[5] gave out that *the absurd superstition of Sunday reading* was, in his time, *one of the curses of England;*[6] but such evidence is now happily impertinent to my purpose, and I omit further reference to it.

Richard de Bury,[7] lover of all books, would sustain all who uphold and prefer religious books: *Certes, thou hast placed thy tabernacle in books, where the Most High, the Light of lights, the Book of Life, has established thee.* In that book everyone who asks is received, everyone who seeks finds, and to everyone *who knocketh boldly it is speedily opened; the cherubim spread out their wings, that the intellect of the student may ascend and look from pole to pole, from the east and west, from the north and from the south.* And greater still, for therein *the mighty and incomprehensible God Himself is apprehensibly contained and worshipped,*

[1] *Diary*. i, 404. [2] 'Table Talk', *Gathered Leaves*. M. E. Coleridge, 317. [3] Prothero, *Memoir of Bradshaw*. 39. [4] *Familiar Letters* (Tenth Ed.) 206. [5] *Life*. i, 392–3. [6] Journal, 8.iv.1849. Qt. *The Times*, 7.xii.1928. [7] *Philobiblon*. Trans. Thomas. 8–9.

the nature of things celestial, terrestrial and infernal is revealed, laws of state discerned, offices of the celestial hierarchy distinguished, and the tyranny of demons described, *such as neither the ideas of Plato transcend, nor the chair of Crato contained.* He finds supporters in every age. Richard Whitlock[1] will have that *most usefull Books* are *the Comments on one of God's Books: that Hieroglyphicall one of Nature and the Creatures; or that precious book of Life, that Verbum Dei, (to be esteemed next to Verbum Deus, that was pleased to be bound up in the course Cover of Humane Nature) that written Epistle of the Creatour to the Creature; In qua quicquid docetur Veritas, praecipitur Bonitas, promittitur Felicitas. Now what Benefit Readers, what Glory Authors may reap from such Labours in comparison of any other Labour under the Sun is demonstrated to those prudent Chapmen of the World that know the just value of Things. Nothing so sweet,* saith Eugénie de Guérin,[2] *as those saintly voices that speak to us of God; nothing so beautiful as what God inspires;* to the understanding of this all reading, say they, should be directed.

All that a University, or final highest school can do for us is to *teach us to read;*[3] and by reading is here meant that which contributes to our virtue, or strength of character. Gellius felt nothing but disgust for those *worthless books, nihil ad ornandum iuvandumque usum vitae pertinentes,* which contribute nothing to the enrichment or profit of life;[4] and of all men perchance, Harrison insists, *the book-lover needs most to be reminded that man's business here is to know for the sake of living, not to live for the sake of knowing;*[5] as John Milton, in his riper years, was led by study from the *laureat fraternity of poets* to the *shady spaces of philosophy,* and chiefly to the *divine volumes of Plato, and his equal Xenophon,* where he *learnt of chastity and love,* and how to distinguish between her *whose charming cup is only virtue, which she bears in her hand to those who are worthy,* and that *thick intoxicating potion, which a certain sorceress, the abuser of love's name, carries about.*[6]

[1] *Zootomia.* 236. [2] *Letters.* Trans. Trebutien. 141. [3] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship.* (1841.) 262. [4] *Attic Nights.* (Loeb Ed.) ix, 4. [5] *Choice of Books.* 20–1. [6] *Apology for Smectymnuus.* (1697.) 336.

III. OF EPHEMERAL AND SHALLOW WORKS

To purge the world of literary rubbish will require some monster-taming Hercules, a ruthless Cæsar, or a Mussolini; but no persuasion, no terror, no persecution can divert those

> Who hunger, and who thirst for scribbling sake;[1]
>
> Tenet insanabile multos
> Scribendi cacoethes.[2]

This scribbling itch is an incurable disease, and Montaigne's *common rabble of scribblers and blur-papers* a constant menace to be circumvented, since cure is beyond hope. It is an ordinary thing for us to account of value those books which have outstripped time, and to press them forward is a prime means of side-tracking the *remorseless cataract of daily literature*,[3] which is no better than so much incontinently discharged waste paper. But to sift the good from the bad in the daily onset taxes all our wit, and in the end our efforts are a *non ens*, a mere flash, a ceremony, a toy, a thing of nought; no use battling against such a stream; all the shouting, the crying and spluttering of all times, have not arrested it, nor will they, for rubbish is necessary to the *profanum vulgus*, light amusement their prerogative: *panis et circenses:*

> Authors hear at length one general cry,
> Tickle and entertain us, or we die![4]

Such ephemeral matter is the *chopped straw* of the circulating library,[5] or those news-sheets, magazines, the trivia of commerce, whether fiction or articles, notes on passing events; read to-day, forgotten to-morrow,

> Sons of a Day! just buoyant on the flood,
> Then number'd with the puppies in the mud;[6]

thistle-down blown hither and thither by the wind and settling nowhere, or, if anywhere, where least wanted, weeds, litter, matter out of place, dust of the mind; *as general and vulgar as a smell.*[7]

[1] Pope, *Dunciad.* i, 50. [2] Juvenal, *Sat.* vii, 52–3. [3] Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 16. [4] Cowper, *Retirement.* [5] Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 28. [6] Pope, *Dunciad.* ii, 307–8. [7] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Letters.* i, 233.

> Yet midst this tide of unpropitious time,
> Quacks advertise, and paltry poets rhyme;
> Book-makers ply their trade—booksellers puff,
> And, urged by avarice, vend the vapid stuff.[1]

Nothing so dwarfs the mind as *to debauch it by frivolous reading, and by the moral dram-drinking of sensational rubbish*,[2] or to pamper it with peptonised pap; but such penurious stuff,

> Abstracts, abridgements, please the fickle times.[3]

There are books to be *perused*, says John Aikin,[4] and books to be *possessed. Of the former you may find ample store in every subscription library. Such books the world swarms too much with*,[5] so that, as Wither says,[6] *those that desire knowledge are still kept ignorant; their ignorance increaseth their affection to vain toys; their affection makes the stationer to increase his provision of such stuff, and at last you shall see nothing to be sold amongst us but Curranto's 'Bevis of Southampton' or such trumpery*. The warehouses are full of *quack-salving receipts, false propositions, in artificial rhymings, of which last*, he ingenuously confesses, *they have some of mine there, God forgive me!* 'Tis a vicious circle. Dr. Johnson (read his *Idler*, No. 85) has some such a notion when he claims for an ignorant age that it had too many books, and Lord Chesterfield the same when he exhorts his son to throw away none of his time *upon those trivial futile books, published by idle or necessitous authors, for the amusement of idle or ignorant readers: such sort of books swarm and buzz about one every day; flap them away*, he commands, *they have no sting;*[7] and Harrison[8] had them in mind when he *could almost reckon the printing press as among the scourges of mankind*.

Beneath the word *Finis*, in one such stupid book, an unknown wit wrote:

> Finis! an error, or a lie, my friend!
> In writing foolish books there is no end;[9]

which Sir Thomas Browne stiffly supports; there are too

[1] *The Craniad*. 8. [2] S. Laing, *Modern Science and Modern Thought*. [3] George Crabbe, *The Library*. [4] *Letters from a Father to his Son*. [5] Thomas Fuller. [6] *The Student's Purgatory*. [7] *Letters to his Son*. cclxxx. [8] *Choice of Books*. 5. [9] Qt. William Davis, *An Olio of Anecdotes*. (1814.) 6.

many books in the world, he says, and he would with patience behold the urn and ashes of the Vatican, could he recover, with a few others, *the perished leaves of Solomon*. It was not *a melancholy Utinam* of his own, but the desire of better heads, that instead of attempting to *unite the incompatible differences* of religion, they should *form a general Synod* for the benefit of learning, to reduce it as it lay at first, *in a few, solid authors; and to condemn to the fire those swarms and millions of 'Rhapsodies', begotten only to distract and abuse the weaker judgements of Scholars, and to maintain the trade and mystery of Typographers.*[1] Good and serious men, lovers of books, scholars and the like, have always thought as much. There is too much writing and printing, 'tis an overdone business, and in all times a menace. *Were all books,* Addison taxeth,[2] *reduced to their quintessence, many a bulky author would make appearance in a penny pamphlet, and there would be scarce any such thing in Nature as a Folio.* Millions of volumes would be *utterly annihilated* and the *works of an age contained on a few shelves;* which is no more than Coventry Patmore argued in our own time when he announced that, *of the forty miles of shelves in the Museum, forty feet would contain all the real literature of the world.*[3] Fuller argues that[4] *foolish pamphlets prove most beneficial to the printers,* and he quotes the story of Rabelais, whose printer was *utterly undone* by printing his solid and serious work concerning physic and was recompensed when Rabelais wrote his *jesting scurrilous work, which repaired the printer's loss with advantages:*

So the worst books some knave will still defend;[5]

not that I, and some others, would condemn Rabelais.[6]

Possibly the endless multiplication of books makes for contempt, encouraging that bibliophobia which is the common lot. *People in general do not willingly read, if they can have any thing else to amuse them,* said Dr. Johnson.[7] *Mankind, as a rule,*

[1] *Religio Medici.* i. 24. [2] *Spectator.* 124. [3] *Memoirs,* Champneys. i, 68. [4] *The Holy State and the Profane State.* [5] J. Taylor, *An Arrant Thief.* [6] Coleridge said: 'I could write a treatise in praise of the moral elevation of Rabelais' work, which would make the church stare, and the conventicle groan, and yet would be the truth, and nothing but the truth.' [7] *Life.* Hill. iv, 218.

detests literature, says Lang.[1] *What an inestimable price would a Virgil or a Homer, a Cicero or an Aristotle bear, were their works, like a statue, a building, or a picture, to be confined only in one place, and made the property of a single person!*[2] Yet I will go on and say that if it be true that *the public which reads, in any sense of the word worth considering, is very, very small*, and that *the public which would feel no lack if all book-printing ceased to-morrow is enormous*, the production of great books is unaffected. What boots it to complain, as he does, that *many of the most valuable books slowly achieve the sale of a few hundred copies*, and that if we gathered from all the ends of the British Empire those men and women who regard fine books as a necessity of life, they could be assembled comfortably in the Albert Hall?[3] The good bookman is not disturbed if *the Reading of most men is like a Wardrobe of old Cloaths that are seldom used*.[4] He can gnaw his own bone. That there are not many of his kind is no disparagement. With a few fine books he is safe, even from fools, for in the presence of great writers they would seek to hide their faults, so Seneca promises[5] and Montaigne approves.[6] Bibliophiles are not reformers or proselytisers; they are not out to defend or propagate ideas or wisdom: *diffused knowledge immortalises itself*,[7] and only the loveless advocate love,

cras amet qui nunquam amavit quique amavit cras amet.[8]

A good book never lacks lovers, and they in turn will reject trivial consolations, ordinary speeches, popular appeals. Known persuasion in this behalf will be of small force; what can a man say that hath not been said? To what end are such phrenetic discourses? You may as soon remove the Matterhorn as alter some men's affections. And though, as Montaigne holds,[9] *there are divers bookes profitable by reason of their*

[1] Intro., *Pleasures of Bookland*, Shaylor. xvi. [2] Addison, *Spectator*. 166. [3] Gissing, *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. 60. [4] Halifax, 'Thoughts and Reflections', *Character of Charles II, etc.* 148. [5] *Epist.* xi. [6] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 313. [7] Sir James Mackintosh, *Vindiciae Gallicae*. [8] 'To-morrow shall be love for the loveless, and for the lover to-morrow shall be love.' *Pervigilium Veneris*. Loeb Ed. 349. [9] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. iii, 217.

subjects of which the author reapeth no commendations at all; it *is not to be remedied,* as my Lord of Verulam hath it, *by making no more books, but by making more good books, which,* as he supports again and most wisely, visualising a beneficent cannibalism, like *the serpent of Moses, might devour the serpents of the enchanters.*[1]

In all ages there have been those who see nought but triviality or even evil in romances, plays, novels and the like, *I never heard of any plays fit for a Christian to read,* Parson Adams objects, *but 'Cato' and 'The Conscious Lovers';* yet he must own that *in the latter there are some things almost solemn enough for a sermon.*[2] *I never read a novel,* says Thoreau,[3] *they have so little real life and thought in them;* Dibdin records[4] that Ludovicus Vives has *strung together* in a *saucy philippic* a long list of popular romances, calling them *ungracious books;* they are, he protests, books written by idle men and *set all upon filth and viciousness;* that men delight in them proves *that vice pleaseth them so much.* There is no shadow of learning in them and they are full of *plain and foolish lies: One killeth twenty himself alone, another killeth thirty; another, wounded with a hundred wounds, and left dead, riseth up again; and on the next day, made whole and strong, overcometh two giants, and then goeth away laden with gold and silver and precious stones.* 'Tis madness, he warns us, to have pleasure in such books; *there is no wit in them, but a few words of wanton lust; which be spoken to move her mind with whom they love, if it chance she be steadfast.* If they be read for this, make an end of it by making *books of bawd's crafts;* he *never heard man say that he liked these books, but those that never touched good books.* In Hazlitt's day *only young ladies from the boarding school, or milliners' girls, read all the new novels that come out,*[5] but nowadays such books are more widely appreciated.

Journalism has been denounced and devoured in all ages; it is a common thing among those who would have a definite

[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning.* ii, 103. [2] *Joseph Andrews.* Fielding. iii. chap. 9. [3] *Week on the Concord.* Scott Library Ed. 61. [4] *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 201. [5] 'On Reading New Books', *Sketches and Essays.* (1839.)

purpose in reading to rail against the popular press, and, like as not, they are the same that condemn romances and novels, as Thoreau:[1] *blessed are they who never read a newspaper, for they shall see Nature, and, through her, God;* and when he was forced to read one of the condemned sheets, he *counterbalanced* the act with a dose of *Herodotus* or *Strabo*. Some object to newspapers because they compete with more permanent writing: *when a nation reads its newspapers it does not read its books.*[2] M. Swann, in *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu*,[3] is of the same opinion: *The fault I find with our journalism is that it forces us to take an interest in some fresh triviality or other every day, whereas only three or four books in a lifetime give us anything that is of real importance.* They forget, however, that much of our best literature rose from the ranks of journalism. On the other hand, there are some few, as Lord Orrery,[4] the friend of Swift, who find newspapers a great relief to a man who leads a solitary life. At his country retreat at Marston, he generally reserved them as a *Feast for night* and passed some of the long evenings *speculating on the advertisements over a Dish of Coffee*. By this means he learnt who sells *the infallible electuary*, and many curious things of other lands, the doings of Stanislaus, and the pronunciation of Polish names.

This collection of opinions is wild, and there is inconsistency in several of the varieties, which need not be more than noted, for *opinion in good men is but knowledge in the making.*[5] To attack them were a waste of time, for they represent a confusion common in one form or other in all periods, and may therefore be looked upon as an idiosyncrasy of the human mind, which cannot affect those who are capable of forming their own tastes. The rest do not count. But I may conclude with some words from Coleridge which indicate that even writers of supreme genius may be afflicted with the same moral squint. Coleridge would not even dignify the reading of these rejected books with the name of reading: *call it rather*, he advises, *a sort of beggarly day-dreaming, during which the*

[1] *Essays and other Writings.* Scott Lib. 254. [2] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. [3] *Swann's Way.* (Du Côté de chez Swann.) Proust. Trans. Scott Moncrieff. i, 32. [4] *Orrery.* 124–5. [5] Milton, *Areopagitica.*

mind of the dreamer furnishes for itself nothing but laziness and a little mawkish sensibility; while the whole *material* and imagery of the dose is supplied *ab extra* by a mental *camera obscura* manufactured at the printing office, which *pro tempore* fixes, reflects and transmits *the moving phantasms of one man's delirium, so as to people the barrenness of an hundred other brains afflicted with the same trance of suspension of all common sense and all definite purpose.* It is but an attempt to reconcile *two contrary yet co-existing propensities of human nature: indulgence of sloth and hatred of vacancy.* The reading of such books he classes with *gaming; swinging or swaying on a chair or gate; spitting over a bridge; smoking; snuff-taking; tête-à-tête quarrels after dinner between husband and wife; conning word by word all the advertisements of the daily advertisers in a public house on a rainy day, etc., etc.*[1]

To this I answer, that although those who read thus lose greatly thereby, for they take the shadow for the substance, yet 'tis their fashion to do so; they like it and no great harm comes to them. Perchance they are thus saved from a worse evil: themselves. Yet none will say that they are wise who prefer a dull and shallow print to a work composed of all graces, elegancies, imagination, an absolute piece, *for beautiful words are, in a real and special sense, the light of thought.*[2]

IV. AGAINST IDLE AND DESULTORY READING

Difficult works only are advocated by many earnest authorities, who hold, with Musonius, that *remittere animum quasi amittere est,*[3] to relax the mind is to lose it, and that books are primarily a means of mental exercise, literature a gymnasium for the intellect. *Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the body, health is preserved, strengthened, and invigorated* by the one, *virtue (which is the health of the mind) is kept alive, cherished, and*

[1] Coleridge, *Biographia Literaria.* [2] Longinus, *The Sublime.* Trans. Prickard. 55. [3] Qt. Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Att.* xviii, 2.

HUNT LIBRARY
CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY

confirmed[1] by the other. *In the sweat of the brow is the mind as well as the body to eat its bread. Nil sine magno Musa labore dedit mortalibus; it is wholesome and bracing for the mind to have the faculties kept on the stretch; like the effect of a walk in Switzerland upon the body.*[2] They would have us read only books with a sting, records of the profundities, books in which to burrow, mole-like, or to gnaw at as the beaver gnaws his log.

Another argument which may be derived from the precedent is that *the use of reading is to aid us in thinking.*[3] Nicholas Breton meant as much when he let his scholar assert that *wordes are without substance, when they are layd for easie beleevers.*[4] Coventry Patmore[5] also puts in a caveat against easy reading, giving out that *to anyone who seeks more in reading than the merest amusement,* it is not *the less pleasant because the way is somewhat rough, and there be many great boulders and even craggy hills which he must avoid and go round instead of over;* on the contrary, *the way often sparkles with gems of forgotten novelty,* and if you do not understand *one-tenth* of a treatise by Aristotle, St. Augustine, St. Thomas Aquinas, Swedenborg, or Hegel, *what you do comprehend remains engraved in your memory like a precious intaglio,* because you have been learning *things* and not gossip *about* things. Not to follow such precepts, they argue, is to destroy both mind and taste. A generation which reads rubbish, or even, as Harrison[6] expostulates, *Zola's seventeenth romance, can no more read Homer than it could read a cuneiform inscription.* There is no *creative* or *moral value* in the *sewage out-fall* produced by them that have made literature a *mere trade;* to read such stuff is no real enjoyment; *non ragioniam di lor, ma guarda e passa. To be addicted to it, is a vice; to manufacture it is a crime. They are not books, these things. To imbibe this compound is not to read.*

Some believe that culture and reading are one: *culture is reading,* Matthew Arnold contends;[7] not, he warns us, any

[1] Steele, *Tatler.* 147. [2] A. and J. C. Hare, *Guesses at Truth.* 458. [3] Edward Gibbon. [4] 'The Angle's Conference with the Scholler'. *Works.* Ed. Kentish-Wright. i, 60. [5] *Religio Poetae, etc.,* 'On Obscure Books'. [6] *Choice of Books.* 28, 66, 70, 79. [7] Preface, *Literature and Dogma.* (1883.) xxvi.

kind of reading, but only that *with a purpose to guide it, and with a system;* and he contends that *a man's life each day depends for its solidity and value on whether he reads during that day, and, far more still, on what he reads during it.*[1] Lord Chesterfield was so much of this way of thinking that he never tired of advising his son to unite the manners of a courtier with the knowledge of a scholar, *to join, what is seldom joined in any of my countrymen, Books and the World;*[2] and he counselled Lord Huntingdon to suspend his classical studies, during the Grand Tour, and to divide his time *between reading the State of Europe from Charlemagne downwards,* and *learning the present world by seeing it* with his own eyes; but although it is necessary to observe life, to *read men and women unbound,* still *the best companions are the best books.*[3]

Ben Jonson[4] laid down that *as it is fit to read the best authors to youth first* they should be of the *openest and clearest,* as *Livy before Sallust, Sidney before Donne.* He warned against *letting them taste Gower or Chaucer first, lest, falling too much in love with antiquity, and not apprehending the weight, they grow rough and barren in language only.* When their judgement grows firm they can read both old and new, but he would have them take heed that they be not corrupted by *their new flowers and sweetness;* advice which Frederic Harrison extols: *idle reading debilitates and corrupts the mind for all wholesome reading;*[5] but this is only half true, for in many instances corruptible minds are already corrupted.

Sir W. Waller expostulates[6] against desultory reading, *running from one book to another, as birds skip from one bough to another, without design; it is no marvel if they get nothing but their labour for their pains, when they seek nothing but change and diversion: they that ride post,* he says, *can observe but little.* He would therefore fix his study solely upon those books that are of most importance to fit him for action, *which is the true end of all learning,* and avoid, with Frederic Harrison,[7] *the misuse of books, the debilitating waste of brain in aimless, promiscuous, vapid*

[1] *Culture and Anarchy.* [2] *Letters to his Son.* [3] *Letters to Lord Huntingdon.* 3. [4] *Timber.* cxvi. [5] *Choice of Books.* 6. [6] *Divine Meditations.* [7] *Choice of Books.* 1.

reading, which is of like kind with the *poisonous inhalation of literary garbage and bad men's worst thoughts*. In their *Guesses at Truth*, Augustus and Julius Hare have an equally notable invective against such reading, which they account mischievous because it turns the memory into *a common sewer for rubbish of all sorts to float through*, and by relaxing attention destroys those powers which should be most improved by it.

Opposing these extremes, some fortify themselves with Pliny the Elder: *Nullus est liber tam malus, qui non ex aliqua parte prosit*,[1] which was copied by Cervantes when he made his bachelor in *Don Quixote*[2] claim *no book so bad but something good may be found in it*. Laurence Sterne never read any book without drawing profit from it; so also Elizabeth Barrett Browning, as she claims in *Aurora Leigh:*

> I read books bad and good—some bad and good
> At once (good aims not always make good books).

John Hill Burton was of this same opinion: *it is difficult, almost impossible, to find a book in which something either valuable or amusing may not be found, if the proper alembic be applied;* books, known to him were curious and amusing, even from *their very badness;*[3] and Lord Sherbrooke was so bold as to tell the students at the Croydon Science and Art Schools, in 1869, that any reading which amused created a taste for reading, therefore he commended novels, and even *frivolous books*. I find support for this theory in the experience of Hughlings Jackson, a notable practitioner in the art of trivial reading when he had a mind to it, or, rather, no mind for better stuff, for he was an admirer of Dr. Johnson, Jane Austen, Trollope and Dickens. In such moods he would read the most *trivial rubbish* and the effect would be beneficial, for he would return *to his serious writing with added zest and spirit*.[4] In fact, he found these works not only restful but fertile. *He could throw a novel or 'Tit-Bits' aside and proceed at once to record any recondite speculations which had flashed into his mind*. This sort of reading

[1] In Pliny, *Epp*. Bk. iii, 5. [2] Pt. ii, Chap. 3. [3] *The Book-Hunter*. 152–3. [4] James Taylor, 'Memoir', in *Neurological Fragments*. Hughlings Jackson. 20.

was a form of rest, for *the moment his brain felt tired he betook himself to his novel again.*[1]

There is so little danger from alleged bad books, or good books with some presumed bad in them, that so safe a guide as John Ruskin would let a young girl *loose in the library as you do a fawn in a field*, to browse at will upon knowledge as the fawn upon herbage: risking ill weeds, *it knows the bad weeds twenty times better than you; and the good ones too, and will eat some bitter and prickly ones, good for it, which you had not the slightest thought were good;*[2] which recalls again Lord Sherbrooke, who advises us to *form a habit of reading at all costs*, not minding what: the taste for *better books will come when you have a habit of reading the inferior.* Thence all is well, for *aquila non captat muscas*, as Glanvill reminds us,[3] the Eagle flies not but at noble game; and a young Alexander *will not play but with monarchs. He that hath been cradled in Majesty, and used to Crowns and Scepters; will not leave the Throne to play with beggars at Put-pin, or be fond of Tops and Cherry-stones: neither will a Spirit that dwells with Stars, dabble in this impurer Mud; or stoop to be a Play-fellow and Copartner in delights with Creatures that have nought but Animal.* All of which arguments are summed up by Milton[4] where he says that *a wise man will make better use of an idle pamphlet, than a fool will do of sacred Scripture;* like a *good refiner* he will *gather gold out of the drossiest volume, whilst a fool will be a fool with the best Book, yea without a Book*, for as Nietzsche advises, *no one can draw more out of things, books included, than he already knows;*[5] so that since, as Shaftesbury advises,[6] *read we must, let writers be ever so indifferent*, there is no need to deprive wise men of their chance of wisdom, in order to keep fools from that which is no hindrance to their folly.

[1] Sir Jonathan Hutchinson, 'Recollections of Jackson', *op. cit.* 32. [2] *Sesame and Lilies.* ii. [3] *Scepsis Scientifica.* (1885.) 211–12. [4] *Areopagitica.* Ed. Holt White. 74. [5] *Ecce Homo.* Trans. Ludovici. 57. [6] *Characteristics.* (1744.) i, 239.

V. VAIN AND PEDANTIC READING CONDEMNED

Some read to think,—these are rare; some to write,—these are common; and some to talk,—and these form the great majority.[1] There are others, and many of them, that eschew all reading except for vainglory,

> Who read huge works to boast what ye have read,[2]

to disport their second-hand stock of ideas and information, *for a fading greedy glory, to cousin and delude the foolish world;*[3] to peacock themselves at large, like Æsop's daw in borrowed feathers. Among them are others who

> Affect all books of past and modern ages,
> But read no further than the title-pages.[4]

They prate: Plato said this, Aristotle that; this from Nietzsche, that from Croce, t'other from Shaw. But what say they themselves? Nothing. It is all idle prattle. A parrot would say as much as these psittacists,

> We have threshed a stock of print and book, and
> winnowed a chattering wind
> And many a soul wherefrom he stole, but his
> we cannot find.[5]

Such readers, if so I dare name them, are no better than the pretender stigmatised by Earle as a mere *nomenclator of authors, which he has read in general in the Catalogue, and in particular in the Title, and goes seldom so far as the Dedication. He never talks of anything but learning, and learns all from talking;*[6]

> As Roman noblemen were wont to greet,
> And compliment the rabble in the street,
> Had nomenclators in their trains, to claim
> Acquaintance with the meanest by his name,

[1] Colton, *Lacon.* [2] Crabbe, *The Library.* [3] Montaigne, *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 388. [4] S. Butler, *Satire upon Imperfection and Abuse of Human Learning.* [5] Kipling, 'Tomlinson', *Barrack-Room Ballads.* 199. [6] 'A Pretender to Learning', *Microcosmography.* xlv.

> And by so mean contemptible a bribe
> Trepanned the suffrages of every tribe;
> So learned men, by authors' names unknown,
> Have gained no small improvement of their own,
> And he's esteemed the learnedest of all others
> That has the largest catalogue of authors.[1]

Some, says Montaigne, went even farther, by having in their retinue tame pedants to prompt them, should they at any time move among friends who desired to speak on matters pertaining to scholarship. Then came the pedants' chance; they were rushed up to fill learning's breach: *some with discourse, some with a verse of Homer, othersome with a sentence, each one according to his skill or profession.* These rich Romans persuaded themselves that all such learning was their own because it was contained in their servants' minds: *whose sufficiencie is placed in their sumptuous libraries.* When asked what they know, they *will require a book to demonstrate the same;* one *durst not tell me that his posteriors are scabious, except he turne over his 'lexicon' to see what posteriors and scabious is.* They take the opinions and knowledge of others into their protection, and that is all; such knowledge is not *enfeoffed* and made their own, as it should be. They recall one who, having need of fire, goes to his neighbour's house rather than light his own. *What availes it us to have bellies full of meat, if it be not digested? If it be not transchanged in us? except it nourish, augment, and strengthen us?* Would Lucullus, whom learning made so great a captain, have acted thus? We rely too much on other men's arms, and so disannul our own strength. *Will I arm myself against the feare of death? it is at Seneca's cost: will I draw comfort either for myselfe, or any other? I borrow the same of Cicero.* He loves not this *begged-for sufficiencie: sure I am,* he stiffly concludes, *we can never be wise, but by our own wisdom,*[2] for to remember too much is to forget all, to be no better than a *bibliolathas* or book-forgetter, as Didymus the Grammarian, who had written so many books, some say as many as 3500, that he could not recall the names of half of them.[3]

[1] S. Butler, *Satire upon Imperfection and Abuse of Human Learning.*
[2] *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. i, 156–7. [3] *Athenaeus.* Loeb. Ed. iv, 139.

There are multitudes who read merely to qualify themselves for the world;[1]

> Man has a natural desire to know,
> But the one half is for interest, the other show;[2]

they are small fellows, *reading coxcombs*, in Mallet's phrase:

> Grave sons of idle Industry and Pride,
> Whom learning but perverts, and books misguide.[3]

John Earle rightly calls them Pretenders to Learning,[4] *Scholar-mountebanks*, and their art a *delusion;* and he marks one down as *oftener in his study than at his Book*, delighted for you *to deprehend him: yet he hears you not till the third knock, and then comes out very angry as interrupted. His table is spread with some Classick Folio, which is as constant to it as the carpet, and hath lain open in the same page this half year. His pocket is seldom without a Greek Testament or Hebrew Bible, which he opens only in the Church, and that when some stander-by looks over. He has sentences for company, some scatterings from Seneca and Tacitus, which are good upon all occasions. If he read anything in the morning, it comes up all at dinner; and as long as that lasts, the discourse is his. He is a great Plagiary of tavern wit, and comes to Sermons only that he may talk of Austin. His Parcels are the mere scrapings from company, yet he complains at parting what time he has lost.* Bliss[5] as frankly reproves such *sottish and idle enthusiasts*, who call learning but a *splendidum peccatum.*

Such coxcombs and mountebanks are numerous and familiar in all ages. They are satirised by Young:

> Unlearned men of books assume the care,
> As eunuchs are the guardians of the fair;[6]

and Hazlitt sees them, *hanging like a film and cobweb upon letters, or like the dust upon the outside of knowledge;*[7] but we are well content if, as Earle adds, those who have taken pains to

[1] J. Butler, *Sermons.* Preface. [2] S. Butler, *Satire on the Imperfection and Abuse of Human Learning.* [3] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anth.* 152. [4] *Microcosmography.* xlv. [5] Qt. *Microcosmography.* Ed. Irwin. Note. 15. [6] *The Love of Fame.* [7] *On the Conversation of Authors.*

be asses, though not to be scholars, are *at length discovered and laughed at.*[1] Dr. Johnson recognized that it was common *for people to talk from books, to retail the sentiments of others;* but he exonerates himself and Boswell from that vice: *You and I,* he said, *do not talk from books.*[2] That pretenders to learning are not extinct is advanced by a later writer,[3] who condemns them as liars, equalling gamblers, and perchance even *anglers,* in this *branch of depravity.* Yet he himself was once of their kind, with *good results* in the esteem of his fellow-readers; but happily *the greying years have almost cured him of the sin.*

Reading may make a full man, but is no guarantee that he will be wise, or even bright. *You, poor fool, must have learned your letters backwards; books have turned your life upside down. You have gabbled your silly philosophy to earth and heaven, which pay no heed whatever to your words.*[4] *Salmasius was a man of enormous reading and no judgment;*[5] Andrew Kippis, according to Robert Hall, *laid so many books upon his head that his brains could not move.*[6]

> And in sad cadence, as the bands condense,
> The curfew tolls the knell of *parting Sense.*[7]

Macaulay[8] insinuates as much in his tale of the young fellow in the Oxford coach who read a novel, *The Hungarian Brothers,* the whole way; the coach stopped for the party to dine in the High Street, and *this youth,* who had *passed half an hour in the midst of that city of palaces, looked about him with his mouth open as he re-entered the coach, and all the while that we were driving away past the* Ratcliffe Library, the Great Court of All Souls, Exeter, Lincoln, Trinity, Balliol, and St. John's.

[1] 'A Pretender to Learning', *Microcosmography.* xlv. [2] *Tour.* Hill's Boswell. vi, 378. [3] Arnold Bennett, in *Evening Standard.* 9.xii.26.

[4] ἐπαρίστερ᾽ ἔμαθες, ᾧ τόνηρε, γράμματα·
ἀνέστροφέν σου τὸν βίον τὰ βίβλια·
πεφιλοσόφηκας γῆ τε κοὐρανῷ λαλῶν,
οἷς οὐδέν ἐστιν ἐπιμελὲς τῶν σῶν λόγων.

Theognetus, in *Athenaeus.* Loeb Ed. iii, 104. [5] Mark Pattison, *Milton.* 106. [6] *Life of Hall,* Gregory. [7] Mathias, *Pursuits of Literature.* 180. [8] *Life,* Trevelyan. i, 249.

When about a mile on the road, the youth, who had not hitherto spoken, said: *That was a pretty town enough. Pray, sir, what is it called?* Macaulay could not answer for laughing, but the youth *seemed unconscious of his own absurdity.*

When books distract a man from the proper observation of life they do nothing but *generate a learned folly.*[1] *Simia est simia, etiamsi purpura vestiatur*, an ape is an ape, though clad in scarlet.[2] Sir. W. Waller feared above most things connected with study such vain acquisition of knowledge; *take me off from the curiosity of knowing only to know*, he prayed, *from the vanity of knowing only to be known, and from the folly of pretending to know more than I do know.*[3] Others in all times have shared his fears: *if I had read as much as other men*, bragged Hobbes, *I should have been as ignorant as others;* and Elizabeth Barrett Browning confessed in a letter to R. H. Horne that if she had *not read half as much* she would have had *stronger and better faculties*, for reading is the *ne plus ultra* of *intellectual indolence.*

The like may be said of any faculty. It is our own fault if we permit our books to become *sepulchres of thought*,[4] and I would therefore rather conclude with our politic Francis Bacon, who, in his treatise *Of the Advancement of Learning*, admits such evils (and many more), that *if any man be laborious in reading and study and yet idle in business and action, it groweth from some weakness of body or softness of spirit; such as Seneca speaketh of: Quidam tam sunt umbratiles, ut putent in turbido esse quicquid in luce est; and not of learning*, or (I say) of true and legitimate reading, for, as Hazlitt rightly holds, *books are but one inlet of knowledge, and the powers of the mind, like those of the body, should be left open to all impressions.*

VI. OLD *v.* NEW BOOKS

Even if the precedent cautions are accurately kept, the objections are not ended, for those who seek to formulate plans to

[1] Channing, *Self-Culture.* [2] Greek Proverb. Qt. Erasmus, *Praise of Folly.* Oxford Ed. 33. [3] *Divine Meditations.* See also Chesterfield's *Letters.* cxlii. [4] Longfellow, 'Wind over the Chimney'.

instruct the young and the unwary in their traffic with books have several opinions *pro* and *con* on the virtues of old and new writings. Old books have many supporters: *some will only read old books, as if there were no valuable truths to be discovered in modern publications*, says Isaac D'Israeli;[1] Hazlitt[2] *cannot understand the rage manifested by the greater part of the world for reading new books*, and he is amazed that so many people *would as soon think of putting on old armour as of taking up a book not published within the last month, or year at the utmost;* and Samuel Rogers[3] frankly confesses that *when a new book comes out, he reads an old one.*

Never read any book that is not a year old. Never read any but famed books. Never read any but what you like, advised Emerson.[4] Only in science, another will have, are the newest books to be read, in literature the oldest: *the Classics are always modern;*[5] *they have attained, they are at rest.*[6] Yet Lord Beaconsfield was not afraid to admit that he preferred a new book, *even if bad, to a classic;*[7] and Hamerton contends[8] that a man who never read anything but the classic authors *would live in an intellectual monastery*, and *would not even understand the classic authors themselves*, for we judge the past by the present. *Do you want to get at new ideas?* Lord Lytton asked his son, and answered, *read old books; do you want to find old ideas? read new ones.*[9] There is no novelty, even in novels, for they

> (witness every month's review)
> Belie their name and offer nothing new.[10]

Nothing so old as a new book, Mark Pattison enjoins,[11] and he quotes out of De Quincey that *one of the misfortunes of life* is *that one must read thousands of books only to discover that one need not have read them.* Long since Bacon[12] knew this when he deprecated such *flashy things*, comparing them to *distilled water*,

[1] *Literary Miscellanies.* (1801.) 183. [2] 'On Reading New Books', *Sketches and Essays.* (1839.) [3] Hayward, *Biog. and Crit. Essays.* i, 106. [4] *Society and Solitude.* 'Books.' [5] Bulwer-Lytton, *Caxtoniana.* [6] Lionel Johnson, *Post Liminium.* 212. [7] *Maxims.* 16. [8] *Intellectual Life.* 384. [9] Qt. *Times Litt. Supp.* 19.x.1906. [10] Cowper, *Retirement.* [11] 'Books and Critics', *Fortnightly Review.* [12] *Essays.* 'Of Studies.'

and 'tis the same tenet which Dr. Johnson holds. Modern writers are but *the moons of literature*, shining with reflected light borrowed from the ancients. Greece appeared to him *to be the fountain of knowledge* and Rome of *elegance*.[1] In this present age Rudyard Kipling[2] contends in a like case, that if we devote ourselves exclusively to modern literature we get to think the world is progressing when it is only repeating itself; and the sum of it all is in the satiric poet:

> Old musty tomes transform'd to volumes new,
> Pens, paste, and shears, eternal toil pursue.[3]

Montaigne was not greatly affected to new books, because ancient authors, in his judgement, were *more full and pithy;*[4] for that reason, belike, those books which have survived from past days, are, as Emerson states,[5] the only ones that have deserved to last. Hazlitt was another who always read an old book when a new one was published: *I hate to read* new *books. There are twenty or thirty volumes that I have read over and over again, and these are the only ones that I have any desire ever to read at all. One would imagine*, he adds,[6] *that books were like women, the worse for being old; that they have a pleasure in being read for the first time; that they open their leaves more cordially; that the spirit of enjoyment wears out with the spirit of novelty; and that, after a certain age, it is high time to put them on the shelf.* Dr. Johnson dilates at large in his essays, conversation, letters (read his copious *Idlers* and *Ramblers*), on the *superfœtation, this teeming of the press in modern times;* and although he gives us to understand that *we must read what the world reads at the moment*, doing so is *prejudicial to good literature*,[7] because, as Hazlitt will have,[8] *the taste for literature becomes superficial as it becomes universal and is spread over a larger space.* Rather than follow in the train of *the insatiable monster of modern reading*, Charles Lamb would *forswear his spectacles, play at put, mend pens, kill fleas, stand on one leg, shell peas, or do whatsoever ignoble diversion you shall* set him to. *Alas!* he expostulates, *I am*

[1] *Life*, iii, 332–3. [2] *A Book of Words*. 79. [3] *The Craniad*. 8. [4] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 112. [5] 'Spiritual Laws', *Essays*. [6] 'On Reading New Books', *Sketches and Essays*. (1839.) [7] *Life*. iii, 332. [8] *Op. cit.*

hurried on in the vortex, I die of new books, or the ever-lasting talk about them. I faint of Longman's. I sicken of the Constables. Blackwood and Cadell have me by the throat; and he relieves himself *with honest John Bunyan, or Tom Brown,* or *Tom anybody, so long as they are not of this whiffling century.*[1] *This literary prurience after new print,* says Harrison, *unmans us for the enjoyment of the old songs chanted forth in the sunrise of human imagination.*[2]

There is a fashion in reading as well as in dress, which lasts only for a season,[3] and many read new books without discrimination, from vanity, to say they have read them, to be in the swim. It is a mania with some to read only those books which have lately come from the press for the sole reason that they are new, and *of all odd crazes,* says Birrell, *the craze to be for ever reading new books is one of the oddest.*[4] Many lesser men are full of such relations, agreeing with the learned Chinese bibliographer, Chi Yun, who catalogued the Imperial Library at Pekin, when he declared that everything worth saying had been said, if we only knew where to find it;[5]

> For out of the old fieldes, as men saithe,
> Cometh al this new corne from yere to yere,
> And out of old bookes, in good faithe,
> Cometh all this new science that men lere.[6]

More ado, saith Montaigne,[7] *to interpret interpretations, than to interpret things; and more bookes upon bookes, than upon any other subject;* commentaries swarm, but of *authors* there is *great penury.* None the less, looking round upon his books, among which are, willy-nilly, several such echoes and distillations, he confesses, with a glint in his wise eye, that he may *presently borrow from a number of such botcherly-patchcotes* (men that he plods not much upon), wherewith to *enamel* his treatise of *Physiognomie.*[8]

When the Earl of Dudley[9] heard of a new poem, he asked

[1] 'The "Lepus" Papers', *Miscellaneous Prose.* 322. [2] *Choice of Books.* 29. [3] Hazlitt, 'On Reading New Books', *Sketches and Essays.* (1839.) [4] 'Books Old and New', *Coll. Essays.* iii, 137. [5] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 122. [6] Chaucer. 'Assembly of Fowles.' 22. [7] 'Of Experience', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 407. [8] *Ib.* 388. [9] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology.* 73.

himself first, whether it was superior to Homer, Shakespeare, Ariosto, Virgil, or Racine, and next whether he had all these at his *fingers' ends*, and then answering himself in the negative, he inferred that it was better to devote what time he had to the reading of *Homer, Ariosto & Co.*, than to newer writers. The good poet Gray[1] (writing to Benjamin West, May 8, 1742) exonerates himself from sending news of the present because he converses (as usual) *with none but the dead*, his *old friends*, who almost make him long to be with them; and, he goes on with a relish: *I have finished the Peloponnesian War, much to my honour, and a tight conflict it was . . . I have drunk and sung with Anacreon for the last fortnight, and am now feeding sheep with Theocritus*, and, quitting his figure because it is foolish, *I have run over Pliny's 'Epistles', and Martial . . . not to mention Petrarch.* James Russell Lowell[2] finds not only a *sense of security* in old books but a *feeling of seclusion* in having a *double wall of centuries* between them and the heats and clamours of contemporary books, and he dilates luxuriously on the sensuous delights of ripe old authors, tasting them as a connoisseur tastes a rare old vintage: *How limpid* (he rejoices) *seems the thought, how pure the old wine of scholarship that has been settling for so many generations in those silent crypts and Falernian amphoræ of the Past.* The voices of the past come from the *morning fields* rather than the *paved thoroughfares* of thought; old books have sucked *colour and ripeness from the genial autumns of all the select intelligences that have steeped them in their love and appreciations; these quaint freaks of russet tell of Montaigne; these stripes of crimson fire, of Shakespeare; this sober gold, of Sir Thomas Browne; this purpling bloom, of Lamb: in such fruits we taste the legendary gardens of Alcinous and the orchards of Atlas.*

New books, objects Austin Dobson,[3] *have* (for the time being) *neither part nor lot in our past of retrospect and suggestion. Of what we were, of what we like or liked, they know nothing; and we—if that be possible—know even less of them. Whether familiarity will breed contempt, or whether they will come home to*

[1] *Poems and Letters.* (1820.) 151–2. [2] *A Library of Old Authors.* [3] *De Libris.* 3–4.

our business or bosom, are *things that lie on the lap of the Fates*. Old books, on the other hand, are memorable by *length of tenure, propinquity*, even by *patience under neglect*. We may never read them, but it would be a wrench to part with them, as all good bookmen know; for, as Lionel Johnson has well said,[1] *we live in time, and the past must always be the most momentous part of it. 'Peace, for I loved him, and love him for ever! The dead are not dead but alive,'* he quotes out of Tennyson, and infers that *what is true of loved humanity is true also of loved humanities, the high expression of man's mind. As Augustine said of the Christian faith, here is a beauty both old and new; only a starveling imagination is so hampered by the accidents of any ancient excellence that it cannot discern the essence which is dateless.*

And so they go on with a sense of the sacredness of authorship and a lively reverence for that which is beautiful with the *patina* of the ages, as many more have done in all times, and not least Alfonso of Aragon, who, as Bacon records in his *Apophthegms*, was wont to say in commendation of what is ripe with age that this quality appeared to be best in four things: *Old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to trust, and old authors to read*, and in this quaternary of desirable old things we may well leave a subject which common experience so universally acclaims, and our William Shakespeare himself has summed up in three words: *Ripeness is all*.[2] That is what they all mean when they claim that there is no joy, no comfort, no sweetness, no pleasure in the world like that of a good book, and that all these are augmented if that book be old as well as good, for none but a zany of learning would set a value upon age *per se*. Against such folly Tacitus warned when he said that *we extol the productions of the ancients but are wholly unmindful of contemporary merit;* and Montaigne also when he argued against the folly that makes us run after *strange and scholastical examples*, deeming *truth to be nothing wiser by being more aged. But is it not*, he asks, *that we rather seek the honour of allegations, than the truth of discourses? As if it were more to borrow our proofs from the shop of Vascosan or Plantin,*

[1] *Post Liminium*. 211. [2] *King Lear*. v, 2.

than from that we daily see in our village;[1] a pitfall into which no bookman this side of bibliomania would slip did he remember also that in no sense can antiquity *privilege an error* or novelty *prejudice a truth.*

John Ruskin came near the truth when he said *all books are divisible into two classes, the books of the hour, and the books of all time,*[2] and Oliver Goldsmith meant no less when, in the *Citizen of the World,* he reckoned up that *the volumes of antiquity, like medals, may very well serve to amuse the curious, but the works of the moderns, like the current coin of a kingdom, are much better for immediate use.* The visits we pay to the former are like those we pay to the great; but our acquaintance with modern books is familiar, giving more inward satisfaction, like sitting with a friend; which, doubtless, is what they all intend when they advise, expound, expostulate and argue upon this theme: *lux longe alia est solis et lychnorum.*[3] There is good and bad in all books whether old or new, and Hamerton detects[4] *jealousy* in the persistence with which contemporaries belittle the older writers, yet he holds that for knowledge *the best authors are always the most recent,* that *our methods have gained in precision since Milton's time,* and that although Shakespeare and Milton can *still fill our imagination richly,* modern writers can do as much.

Hazlitt again would sum up the matter in an irony hinting that survival is a test of merit: *I do not think altogether the worse of a book for having survived the author a generation or two,* he argues,[5] yet *I have more confidence,* he confesses, *in the dead than in the living.* I am not entirely with him in that, though I would say with Lionel Johnson,[6] *take me with you in spirit, Ancients of Art, the crowned, the sceptred, whose voices this night chaunt a 'gloria in excelsis', flooding the soul with a passion of joy and awe;* for, as he explains, *the voices of the day must wait for their consecrate authority and confirmed applause till Time, the just, shall please:* books being living things must ripen, and they

[1] *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 426. [2] *Sesame and Lilies.* i. [3] 'There is a wide difference between the light of the sun and that of a lamp.' *Cicero.* Coel. 28. [4] *Intellectual Life.* 382–3. [5] 'On Reading Old Books', *The Plain Speaker.* 1826. ii, 64. [6] *Post Liminium.* 217–18, 213.

ripen best, like buildings and the greater trees, in the spaces of time; even the mediocrities of the past, he says, are more tolerable than those of the present: *the blunders of the dead are over and done, harming no one; the blunders of the living are a danger and a nuisance:* which is as it should be, *de mortuis nil nisi bonum.* But who can speak of all, or account for all times and what may happen in them? Great writers have been born and become classics, since many of my authorities upheld the past, each in his time, and no one shall say what the future may hold: *there is more day to dawn, the sun is but a morning star;*[1] and although it may well be *an economy to read old and famed books,* as Emerson advises,[2] the *company of the masters* is *a roll long closed and complete, the gates which lead to the Elysian fields may slowly wheel back, on their adamantine hinges, to admit some new and chosen modern.*[3] *Ab uno disce omnes,* take this for a taste, and look out for the best: *Speak of the moderns without contempt, and of the ancients without idolatry; judge them all by their merits, but not by their ages.*[4]

VII. SUBSTITUTES FOR LIFE

There are, as all know, many paths by which we may search out powers and faculties of human nature, consider its wants, survey its inclinations, propensities and desires, ponder its intuitions, proposals and ends, examine the causes and fitness of its attitudes and ambitions, the worth of them all, their general excellency. Books are but one, and they are better as instruments of life than substitutes for life. Even good bookmen, like John Burroughs, ask for *few books and plenty of real things.*[5] *Everything,* says Epictetus,[6] has *two handles, the one by which it may be borne, the other* by which it cannot. It is in our choice to take and leave what we will, and in our own power, as they say, to make or mar ourselves. *By Jupiter,*[7] Calvisius

[1] H. D. Thoreau, *Walden.* Scott Lib. 331. [2] *Society and Solitude.* (1870.) 163. [3] Frederic Harrison, *Choice of Books.* 23. [4] Chesterfield, *Letters to his Son.* cxlii. [5] *Indoor Studies.* 244. [6] *Enchiridion.* Trans. Elizabeth Carter. [7] Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights.* Loeb Ed. i, 9.

Taurus exclaimed, *one man actually asks to read Plato, not in order to better his life, but to deck out his diction and style, not to gain in discretion, but in prettiness.*

We may study the same things with diverse results, for palates vary according to their constitution and the ends at which they aim, so let experience determine. Jeremy Collier held that *to take Measures wholly from Books, without looking into Men and Business, is like travelling in a Map, where though Countries and Cities are well enough distinguished, yet Villages and private Seats are either overlooked, or too generally marked for a stranger to find; therefore he that would be a Master must Draw from the Life, as well as copy from Originals, and joyn Theory and Experience together.*[1] The learned and pious Dr. Henry More confessed that he *very sparingly so much as read any books*, seeking *a more near Union with a certain Life and Sense than the Driness of mere Reason, or the Wantoness of the trimmest Imagination*, however much those may be *useful Instruments for some to draw them to Good.* He read not all, but the most *Useful Writings*, holding *Ille Intellectus qui Plura intelligit non est Nobilior, sed qui Digniora:* that understanding is the noblest which knows not the most but the best things. He bragged that he was no *Wholesale Man*, for the more we attended to things *ad extra*, the less we did to those *ad intra;* his motto: *Claude Fenestras, ut Luceat Domus*, shut the window that the house may be lit, intimates *that we must turn our eyes inwards, if we would behold the shining truth in our own minds;*[2] or upwards, as some hold,

> he who receives
> Light from above, from the fountain of light,
> No other doctrine needs, though granted true;[3]

but 'tis all one if, as some would agree, *the Kingdom of God is within*, and he

> who reads
> Incessantly, and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
> (And what he brings, what needs he elsewhere seek?)
> Uncertain and unsettl'd still remains,

[1] *Essays on Several Moral Subjects.* ii, 100. [2] *Life*, Ward. xii.
[3] Milton, *Paradise Regained.* iv, 288–90.

Deep verst in books and shallow in himself,
Crude or intoxicate, collecting toys,
And trifles for choice matters, worth a spunge;
As children gathering pebbles on the shore.[1]

The earth has had to forget its books, says F. D. Maurice, *that it might recover its men*.[2] Men come first, and when the world has recovered them, they produce books, which do not crush manhood: they call it forth, showing what men have been and what they may be; they show what a divine discipline has been at work to form men; *they teach us that there is such a discipline at work to form us into men;* that is the test, he urges, to which all books must at last be brought: *if they do not bear it their doom is fixed.* They may be light or heavy, penny sheet or vast folio; *they may speak of things seen or unseen; Science or Art; what has been or what is to be; they may amuse us or weary us, flatter or scorn us:* but if they do not help to *make us better and more substantial men*, they only provide fuel for *a fire larger, and more utterly destructive, than that which consumed the Library of the Ptolemies*.[3] But I will urge these cavilling and contumelious arguments no farther, yet before I conclude I will add a relation out of the *Centuries of Meditations* of our wise Traherne,[4] what he hath said tending to this purpose: *He that knows the secrets of nature with Albertus Magnus, or the motions of the heavens with Galileo, or the cosmography of the moon with Hevelius, or the body of man with Galen, or the nature of diseases with Hippocrates, or the harmonies in melody with Orpheus, or of poesy with Homer, or of grammar with Lilly, or of whatever else with the greatest artist; he is nothing, if he knows them merely for talk or idle speculation, or transient and external use. But he that knows them for value, and knows them his own shall profit infinitely.* Many besides might I reckon up in this wise, but I have set out that which I intended, *et sic demonstratur, quod erat demonstrandum*, which is to the same purpose as that tenet of Lord Balfour: *Fill a dull man to the brim with knowledge and he will not become less dull.*[5]

The mind nauseates the thought of processions of learned

[1] *Ib.* 322–30. [2] *Friendship of Books.* 62. [3] *Ib.* 91. [4] xli, 189. [5] *Essays and Addresses.* 10.

dunces and dullards: schoolmasters, professors, dons, clerics, popes of knowledge, morosophi, wise fools, who

> Turn Caxton, Wynkyn, each old Goth and Hun,
> To rectify the reading of a pun.
> Thus, nicely trifling, accurately dull,
> How one may toil, and toil,—to be a fool![1]

tyrants of information, crammed, packed full of learning, but lifeless, stupid, repellent, *men who have piled such a load of books on their heads, their brains have seemed to be squasht by them.*[2]

> The bookful blockhead, ignorantly read,
> With loads of learned lumber in his head.[3]

They have neither lived wisely nor read wisely. *They regard knowledge as a kind of capital—not revenue. They sit on the bag. It's the credit of knowing they care for, and the credit of not knowing they fear.*[4] They are neither big readers nor little readers. They are worse than those who, according to Sir W. Waller,[5] affect rather to look upon books, than in them; thus missing their grace and glory. They have purchased unto themselves nought but tediousness, which they too fondly communicate to others, for if, as Swift asserts,[6] wit without knowledge is *a sort of cream, which gathers in a night to the top, and by a skilful hand may be soon whipped into froth, but once scummed away, what appears underneath will be fit for nothing, but to be thrown to the hogs*, what shall we say of knowledge without wit? *Quid enim est tam furiosum quam verborum vel optimorum atque ornatissimorum sonitus inanis, nulla subiecta sententia nec scientia?*[7] What they both advance is that a balance between judicious learning from books and from experience should be our aim, an idea well put by Jeremy Collier when he wrote that *He who depends only upon his own Experience, has but a few Materials to work upon. He is confined to narrow Limits both of Time and Place: And is not fit to draw a large Model, and to pronounce upon*

[1] D. Mallet. Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anth.* 152. [2] A. and J. C. Hare, *Guesses at Truth.* (1889.) 149. [3] Pope, *Essay on Criticism.* 612–13. [4] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Letters.* i, 266. [5] *Divine Meditations.* [6] *Battle of the Books*, Preface. [7] 'For what so mad as the sound of empty words, however well chosen and elegant, if there be no basis of sense or sagacity?' Cicero, *De Oratore.* i, 51.

Business which is complicated and unusual. He sees the same difference between a *Man of meer Practice* and a man of *Learning* as between an *Empirick* and a *Physician. The first,* he says, *may have a good Receipt, or two; and if Diseases and Patients were very scarce, and all alike, he might do tolerably well. But if you enquire concerning the Causes of Distempers, and the Constitution of Human Bodies, the Danger of Symptoms, and the Methods of Cure, upon which the Success of Medicine depends, he knows little of the Matter.*[1] For the rest, as Lord Chesterfield advises, *wear your learning like your watch, in a private pocket; and do not pull it out, and strike it, merely to show that you have one;* which is no more than he intends when he says *if you happen to have an Elzevir classic in your pocket, neither show it nor mention it.*[2] I shall leave it at that: *verbum satis sapienti.*

[1] 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays.* ii. 99–100. [2] *Letters to his Son.* cxlii.

PART VII

STUDY AND BOOK-LEARNING

I. THE FASCINATION OF STUDY

In any catalogue of the uses of books, high place must be given to *the delight of knowledge and learning*, which, as some point out, *surpasseth all other in nature*, for in all *other pleasures there is satiety, and after they be used, their verdure departeth; which showeth well they be but deceits of pleasure, and not pleasures: and that it was the novelty which pleased, and not the quality; therefore we see that voluptuous men turn friars, and ambitious princes turn melancholy. But of knowledge there is no satiety, satisfaction and appetite* being *interchangeable.*[1] *To most kind of men it is an extraordinary delight to study*, says Robert Burton,[2] *for what a world of books offers itself, in all subjects, arts, and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the Reader!* It is, indeed, a world of endless exploration and uncountable adventures, full of strange countries, peoples, animals; wonders, beauties, terrors, astonishments; it has treasures and riches; curiosities, freaks, fantasies, monsters, hobgoblins, fays, gnomes, satyrs, nymphs; trees, flowers

> With buds, and bells, and stars without a name,
> With all the gardener Fancy e'er could feign,
> Who breeding flowers, will never breed the same;[3]

a world without end, for *all that Mankind has done, thought, gained, or been: is lying as in magic preservation in the pages of Books.*[4]

Books are the universe in print, nay, eternity; the sure preservatives of events:

> Troy owes to Homer what whist owes to Hoyle:
> The present century was growing blind
> To the great Marlborough's skill in giving knocks,
> Until his late Life by Archdeacon Coxe.[5]

[1] Bacon, *Advancement of Learning*. Bk. i. [2] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 102. [3] Keats, 'Ode to Psyche'. [4] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. (1841.) 259. [5] Byron, *Don Juan*. xc.

And if, as George Herbert attests (in *Jacula Prudentum*), *the years know more than books*, which needs no defence, without books the years would have less significance, for books are the reading-glasses of time, and *Knowledge, the Quarry out of which these Jewels (Books) are digged;*[1] *haurit aquam cribris qui vult sine discere libris,*[2]

> Who, without Books, essays to learn,
> Draws water in a leaky urn;[3]

they reflect the present and *summon up remembrance of things past.*[4] A book itself, as I have quoted out of Carlyle, is a university; Gibbon's Autobiography *supplied the place of a college* for Mark Pattison,[5] not only giving advice, but inspiring him to follow it.

What *magic casements* are opened by them on all the wonderlands of Science, Mathematics, Sociology, Biology, Chemistry, Astronomy, Psychology, Medicine, Geology, Anthropology, etc., of which so many and such elaborate treatises are of late written: in Mechanics and Manufactures, Crafts and Trades, and their mysteries; Military matters, Aeronautics, Navigation, Riding of Horses, Fencing, Cricket, Racing, Swimming, Golf, Billiards, Tennis, Hunting, Motoring, Fishing, Fowling, etc., with exquisite pictures of all sports and games, and what not! In Music, Art, Poetry, Philosophy, Philology, Heraldry, Bibliography, Genealogy, Topography, Geography, etc., they afford great tomes; or of those studies of Antiquity: Archæology, Ethnology, Paleontology, History and the like: what so speculative, what so pleasant? What vast tomes are extant on Law and Divinity, for profit, pleasure, practice, or speculation! The names of books alone fill whole volumes: all manner of authors of all manner of kinds offering endless feasts to suit all palates.

Some take an infinite delight to study the very languages wherein these books are written, Greek, Latin, Hebrew, French, German, Italian, Syriac, Sanscrit, Chaldaic, Arabic, etc.

[1] Richard Whitlock, *Zootomia*. 238. [2] Motto on Lord de Tabley's bookplate. [3] Austin Dobson, *A Bookman's Budget*. 188. [4] Shakespeare, *Sonnets*. 30. [5] Pattison, *Memoirs*. 130.

Methinks it would please any man to peruse those excellent books of Travel put out by Cook, Mungo Park, Wallace, Waterton, Marco Polo, Shackleton, Bruce, Scott, Hakluyt, Richard Burton, Mary Kingsley, Nansen, Dampier, Sven Hedin, Doughty: to go with them to the ends of the earth and never go forth the limits of his study; to read those exquisite descriptions of cities, temples, pictures, monuments of Ruskin, John Addington Symonds, Walter Pater, Arthur Symons, Pierre Loti, Sacheverell and Osbert Sitwell; those famous histories of Herodotus, Thucydides, Cæsar, Livy, Tacitus, Suetonius, Gibbon, Napier, Macaulay, Grote, Mommsen, Green; those natural histories of Pliny, Linnæus, Buffon, Cuvier, Darwin, Faber, Hudson; those accurate diaries and curious confessions of Benvenuto Cellini, Evelyn, Pepys, Sully, Rousseau, Marie Bashkirtseff, Blunt, Barbellion; those pleasant epistles of Cicero, Pliny, Walpole, Lamb, Madame de Sévigné, Edward FitzGerald, Keats, Cowper, Lady Mary Montague, making us privy to their familiar affairs, tastes, ambitions, aspirations, etc.; the curious itineraries of Johnson, Boswell, Davidson, Edward Lear, Richard Le Gallienne, Hilaire Belloc, Aldous Huxley, Lady Duff Gordon, Dufferin; and all the essays, poems, novels, tales, that make up this multi-coloured and multitudinous world *flowing with milk and honey*. To see well-cut Herbals, Entomologies, Ornithologies, Conchologies, expressed in their proper colours to the life; to see birds, beasts, and fishes of the sea, spiders, gnats, scorpions, serpents, flies, living and extinct monsters, etc., all creatures set out by the same art, or by photo-engraving, lithography, collotype, stencil, etc., and truly expressed in lively colours, with an exact description of their natures, virtues, qualities, etc., as hath been accurately performed by various cunning artificers of past and present times: what more pleasing studies can there be than these?

Such is their excellency that (I say with Burton) all those ornaments and childish baubles of wealth are not worthy to be compared with them. I could live and die with them, as he saith, and take more delight, true content of mind in them than thou hast in all thy wealth and sport, whoever and how

rich soever thou art. And, as Cardan[1] well seconds him, *Honorabile magis est et gloriosum haec intelligere quam provinciis praeesse, atque juvenem esse:* it is more honourable and glorious to understand these truths than to govern provinces, and to be young. *To most persons books are but an amusement, an interlude between the hours of serious occupation,* but *the scholar is he who has found the key to knowledge, and knows his way about in the world of books.*[2] So sweet is the delight of Study, the more learning he has the more he covets to learn (as he that hath a dropsy, the more he drinks the thirstier he is), and the last day is the pupil of its predecessor, *prioris discipulus;* the longer he lives the more he is enamoured of the Muses: *the zeal of learning is never out of date; the example—were there no more—burns before one as a sacred fire, for ever unquenchable;*[3] and well it may, *for there is no treasure so much enriches the mind of man as learning; for learning nature acknowledgeth a reason, by leaving industrie to finish her unperfect work; for without learning conceyte is like a fruitfull soyl without tilling, the memorie like a storehouse without wares, the will like a shippe without a rudder.*[4] I may therefore boldly conclude as I began this chapter, with Francis Bacon[5] and that which hath *rationem totius:* which is, that learning *disposeth the constitution of the mind not to be fixed or settled in the defects thereof, but still to be capable and susceptible of growth and reformation.*

II. WHAT SEEK THESE STUDIOUS ONES?

In the other extreme or defect of this love of learning, studies, knowledge, scholarship, I know there are such as err in kind and quantity, bookworms, misers of knowledge, moles of print, eternally burrowing in musty tomes without purpose, pedants, missing the sweetness and the light of life. Cousin-german to them are those pretenders of learning, literate fools

[1] Qt. Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 104. [2] Mark Pattison, *Milton.* 110. [3] Gissing, *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 37. [4] 'A. B. To the Reader', in *The End of Nero, etc.* Tacitus. Hist. iv. Trans. Savile. 1591. [5] *Advancement of Learning.* Bk. i.

who sit in wise men's seats, whom the common people hold learned, grave and wise; and those other vain students *whose learning* Roger Ascham described as *gotten in a summer heat, and washed away with the Christmas snow again.*[1] But before I can come to treat of these several errors and obliquities, their causes, symptoms, affections, which I do apart, I must say something of the object, joys, and allurements of the scholarly passion.

What seek they who study with so much avidity, with such absorption? I speak not of those who study for position, occupation or preferment in profession or trade—Milton, in his trade of poetry, retired to Horton, as he told Diodate: consuming five years of solitude in reading ancient writers as a preparation for the writing of *Paradise Lost*,

Et totum rapiunt me, mea vita, libri—[2]

but of those who love study for its own sake, who glory in that *felicitous studiousness* and that *studious felicity* which Richard de Bury[3] attributes to *the all-powerful eunuch*, who, we are told in the *Acts*, was *so mightily kindled* by the prophetic books that he ceased not to study on his long journey, *banished all thought of the populous palace of Queen Candace*, and *forgot even the treasures of which he was keeper*, ignoring alike the incidents of his journey and the chariot in which he rode; those who know Learning, as Nicholas Breton so eagerly proves and firmly demonstrates, *the darling of wisdom and the delight of wit, unpleasing to none that knows her, unprofitable to none that loves her*, making *age honourable, youth admirable, the virtuous wise and the wise gracious: the nurse of nature, with that milk of reason that would make a child of grace never lie from the dug.*[4]

In the fervour of learning they find wisdom, which is joy, ecstasy; whether they seek it or not, it is bliss, for the *Round of Knowledge* is *like the great and exemplary Wheels of Heaven.*[5]

[1] *The Schoolmaster*. i. [2] 'And I am wholly captivated by my books, which are my life.' Milton, *Ad Carolum Diodatum*. 26. [3] *Philobiblon*. Trans. Thomas. 96–7. [4] *Characters upon Essays: Moral and Divine*. [5] Sir Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Pref. Works. i, 115.

Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold (Proverbs iii, 13–14). The scholar and the poet are related, in Joubert's opinion, because they *become such, more for pleasure than by labour;* they are *impelled* or *restrained* not *by their ambition but* by *their genius.*[1] They will not be denied; no temptations powerful enough to draw them from their studies; riches, honours, rewards, love, adventures, have no manner of purchase for them. *I would rather,* Alexander told Aristotle,[2] *be first in learning than in wealth and power.* Nor can threats, intimidations, or dangers affect them. There are many examples: Richard de Bury (*Philobiblon, ix*) relates of Taurus the Philosopher (out of *Aulus Gellius*), how the Athenians, hating the people of Megara, decreed that any of them entering Athens should be put to death; but despite that decree Euclid, himself a Megarean, was so determined to hear the lectures of Socrates that he disguised himself as a woman and thus had his wish, travelling from Megara to Athens each night, a distance of twenty miles. The learned fervour of Archimedes was so *imprudent and excessive* that the same study which saved his life deprived him of it; for *assuming as much glory in saving Archimedes, as in destroying Syracuse,* Marcellus, after his great Sicilian victory, commanded the soldiers to spare the life of the philosopher; but while Archimedes was making geometrical figures near his home, his eyes fixed upon the ground, a soldier entering his house, bent on plunder, asked him who he was. The philosopher was so intent that he made him no direct answer, but pointing to the figure, he said, *Have a care not to spoil this circle.* Thereupon the soldier, feeling that the victor of the Empire had been slighted, drew his sword and cut off the philosopher's head, *blending his blood with the lineaments of his art.*[3]

If learning is denied to men because of their station in life, they will get it all the same, as those two Chinamen[4] in the

[1] *Selected Thoughts,* Trans. Lyttleton, 176. [2] Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights.* Loeb Ed. xx, 5. [3] Q. V. Maximus, *Romae Antiquae Descriptio.* Eng. trans. (1678.) 399. [4] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 27.

fourth century B.C., who, being servants in a school, picked up their education by inscribing exercises on the palms of their hands and on their bare legs, and transcribing them at night when they got home; or on the other side, Cheng Hsuan, to whom Confucius appeared in a vision, who was rich and so fond of wine that he is said to have been able to take three hundred cups without *losing his head*, yet he lived so much for learning that his very slave girls were highly educated, and inlarded their conversation with quotations from the *Odes*, like Sir Maurice Meanwell's servants in *The Female Virtuosos*, who became so learned after the example of the heroine of that play, that even his *little boy cannot turn the spit without a Pharamond or a Cassandra in his hand*, and if he calls for drink, the butler brings him a *Spenser* or a *Ben Jonson*. Giles tells also how K'uang Heng, a famous minister of the time of the Emperor Yuan Ti, being born in poverty, entered the service of a wealthy man as a wageless menial, for the sole chance of being within reach of books; he had no candles, so at night time bored a hole in the wall between his own and a neighbour's house, and was thus able to filch enough light to carry on his studies with success.[1]

No labour in the world too great for them that love learning, and if those labours in our times are reduced by the preservation of books, and their general accessibility, in ancient times knowledge was gathered with difficulties which none but the heroic could surmount. Printing not being in use, as Thomas Hearne points out,[2] scholars were forced very often to travel into other countries, if they desired, as they did, *advantage of any book*. Pythagoras travelled into Egypt and *stayed there many years before he could be admitted to a knowledge of their mysteries*, returning a complete scholar and philosopher. For aught I know, Hearne continues, he might have understood all those inscriptions which are reported to have been upon the Pyramids. That which made the ancients the more ready and expert was the art with which they used to strengthen their memories.

When they were particularly in love with any author, *they*

[1] *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 386. [2] *Herneanae*. Ed. Bliss. 85.

not only read him over and over, but would be at the pains of transcribing him several times. Demosthenes so admired Thucydides, that *he writ him over eight times with his own hand;* and we have other notable instances, as that of Petrarch when on a visit to Liège. Finding a good company of books, he transcribed one oration of Cicero with his own hand and had another written out by a colleague, under great difficulties, for *in that fair city of the barbarians it was very difficult to get any ink*, and what he did get was *as yellow as saffron;*[1] and nearer our own time, Dr. Henry Aldrich used often to transcribe the authors he read, especially when he was to print anything. But to such as are well informed, this passion for study is common knowledge; most of them can augment its history from their own reading or observation, and they will each make answer in like case that it is a stimulation in youth, a consolation in age, whatever misadventures affect its less fortunate devotees.

But have I not yet sufficiently answered mine own question: To what end? There may be no answer, study being an end in itself. I should be well content with that conclusion, for can we be in better condition than happy? Yet some ask more of study, and some have found more, as I have shown. Some have gone so far as to find in learning the key of life and an assurance of immortality. When Dante, in the seventh Circle of his *Inferno*, addresses Brunetto Lattini as

> La cara e buona imagine paterna
> Di voi, quando nel mondo ad ora ad ora
> M' insegnavate come l' uom s' eterna:[2]
>
> The dear, benign, paternal image, such
> As thine was, when so lately thou didst teach me
> The way for man to win eternity,[3]

he is referring, Tatham reminds us,[4] to *the new secular learning*, to which Brunetto's work had introduced him, awakening in him the desire for that earthly fame which should make his name immortal; 'tis a common humour, incident to all men, to applaud and flatter themselves with the notion of earthly

[1] Qt. Elton, *Great Book-Collectors*. 43. [2] *Inferno*. xv, 83–5. [3] *Ib.* Trans. Cary. i, 65. [4] *Francesco Petrarca*. ii, 20.

fame and heavenly bliss, and I doubt not that Dante was among the rest in this business, for men have not, even in our time, learnt to live without reward or purpose, for the joy of living, as they say, or if some have, and I know some have, they are shy in admitting it, fearing, as they well may, the resentment of the venal and the purposeful.

But I grow tedious and must make an end, for I have said enough to the observant, and *a nod is as good as a wink to a blind horse;* howbeit, if a purpose you would have for your studies beyond that of the immediacy of your trade (on which matter I would not trespass, for it is not my business), take the words of Francis Bacon again (I know none better), where he argues that *as both heaven and earth do conspire to contribute to the use and benefit of man;* so the end ought to be *to separate and reject vain speculation; whatsoever is empty and void,* and *to preserve whatsoever is solid and fruitful: that knowledge may not be as a courtesan, for pleasure and vanity only, or as a bondswoman, to acquire and gain to her master's use; but a spouse, for generation, fruit, and comfort;*[1] and let us remember, as Goethe advises, after Socrates, *not to indulge in empty speculation,* but to *live and do.*[2]

III. STUDIES AND OLD AGE

No labour in the world is like unto study, for no other labour is less dependent upon the rise and fall of bodily condition; and, although learning is not quickly got, there are ripe wits and scholarly capacities among men of all physical degrees, whilst for those of advancing years study is of unsurpassed advantage, both for enjoyment and as a preventative of mental decay. *Old men retain their intellects well enough,* said Cicero, then on the full tide of his own vigorous old age, *if only they keep their minds active and fully employed;*[3] and Dr. Johnson holds the same opinion: *There must be a diseased mind,* he said, *where there is a failure of memory at seventy.*[4] Cato (so Cicero tells

[1] *Advancement of Learning.* Bk. i. [2] *Maxims.* Trans. Bailey Saunders. 161. [3] *De Senectute.* 22. Trans. E. S. Shuckburgh. 38. [4] *Life.* Ed. Hill. iii, 191.

us) was a tireless student in old age; when past sixty he composed the seventh book of his *Origins*, collected and revised his speeches, wrote a *treatise on augural, pontifical, and civil law*, and studied Greek to keep his *memory in working order;* he held that such studies were *the training grounds of the mind*, and prophylactics against consciousness of old age.[1] Isaac D'Israeli[2] has several instances of the pursuit of studies into advanced age: how Socrates learnt to play on musical instruments when an old man, Cato *thought proper* to learn Greek and Plutarch Latin, when the one had reached his eightieth year and the other was approaching it; Theophrastus began his *Characters* at ninety; Izaak Walton wrote his Life of Bishop Sanderson at eighty-five; the great Arnauld was studying rigorously at eighty-two; Ronsard applied himself late to books, and Boccaccio was thirty-five before he commenced his studies in *polite literature;* Sir Henry Spelman began to *cultivate the sciences* at fifty; Colbert returned to his Latin and Law studies at sixty; Tellier, Chancellor of France, learned Logic in order to dispute with his grandchildren; Dr. Johnson *applied himself* to the Dutch language a few years before his death; Ogilby, the translator of *Homer* and *Virgil*, knew little Latin or Greek till he was past fifty; Franklin did not begin his *philosophical pursuits* until he was nearly the same age; and I have heard it said that Queen Victoria took up Hindustani when past seventy.

Michelangelo was so proud of his capacity for study in extreme old age, that he is said to have invented the device representing an old man in a go-cart bearing an hour-glass and the inscription *Ancora imparo*, I am still learning. Ludovico Monaldesco, at the extraordinary age of 115, wrote the Memoirs of his times, and La Casa bragged, in a letter to a friend, that he would go on making sonnets twenty-five or thirty years after his death: *Io credo ch' io faro Sonnetti venti cinque anni, o trenta, poi che io saro morto.* As this may be no more than a fantastic boast, I shall resolve this chapter with Adam Smith, who contends that *of all the amusements of old age, the most grateful and soothing is a renewed acquaintance with*

[1] *Op. cit.* 61–2. [2] *Cur. Lit.* i, 171–5.

the favourite studies of youth, and as he said it *Sophocles* and *Euripides* lay open before him for proof. How many such encomiums I might add out of the histories of scholars and learned men is so well known to all experienced readers, that I need not examine further particulars, for there are few who will dispute that the intellect and the soul require support as well as the body, *for they are like lamps: unless you feed them with oil, they too go out from old age.*[1]

IV. A DIGRESSION OF CAPACIOUS MEMORIES

If a people can be *destroyed for lack of knowledge* (*Hosea* iv, 6), a man, in spite of the belief that *a good memory is an essential element of genius*,[2] may be destroyed or translated into a dolt of learning, a dizzard, a mere zany of words, by excess of it. As the athlete may become muscle-bound, or a glutton pot-bellied, so may an incontinent scholar become memory-bound, pot-headed: remembering all, knowing nought: no more than a *walking encyclopædia;*

> Pox on't, quoth *Time* to *Thomas Hearne*,
> Whatever I *forget* you learn.[3]

Yet great industry in study and capacious memory have often accompanied practical ability, as when Mithridates learned the two and twenty several tongues current within his dominions, in order to address his army and discourse with his people without intermediaries, and that other Persian king, Cyrus, found it convenient to remember the names of all his soldiers;[4] and it is said that Themistocles *could call by name the* 20,000 *citizens of Athens*.[5] But to such as are judicious, and immune from dotage, the dangers of excessive memory are easily avoided or remedied, so out of humane authors I shall take a few examples which, though curious in themselves, may serve as cautions (some of them) to those in danger of

[1] Cicero, *De Senectute*. Trans. Shuckburgh. 36. [2] J. F. Nisbet, *Insanity of Genius*. 255. [3] Qt. Dibdin, *Bibliomania*. Ed. 1811. 445. [4] Q. V. Maximus, *Romae Antiquae Descriptio*. 401. [5] Nisbet, *op. cit.* 255.

remembering too much. Bookmen of capacious memories are common to all lands. In China, Chang Fang-p'ing committed the *Three Histories* to memory, Ch'en T'uan could remember anything read over once, and that *precocious student,* Chang An-shih, was able so exactly to repeat the contents of *three boxes of books,* which were missing, *that on recovery of the books they were found to tally exactly with his description.*[1] Niebuhr, *the historian, restored from recollection a large book of accounts that had been accidentally destroyed in one of the public offices of Denmark;*[2] and in our own land, Ben Jonson could repeat *all that he had ever written and whole books that he had read;*[3] Dr. Sanderson, Bishop of Lincoln, had so matchless a memory that he could recite all the *Odes of Horace,* all Tully's *Offices,* and much of *Juvenal* and *Persius, without book;*[4] the Rev. John Beale, the scientifical Rector of Yeovil in Somerset and sometime Chaplain to King Charles II, could memorize the contents of any book after a single reading; Richard Heber was ever *ready and copious in long quotations from Politian, Sannazarius, Vida,* etc., and Dibdin and Drury once heard him repeat Canning's *Iter ad Meccam from beginning to end, apparently without a single trip; his memory,* saith mine author,[5] was only exceeded by that of Porson, which he had often heard him call *almost divine.* Dr. George Hakewill claims that one of the most famous for memory among the ancients was Seneca, the father, *who reports of himself that he could repeat two thousand names, or two hundred verses, backward or forward;* but, mine authority adds, out of *Muretus,* a young man of Corsica *far exceeds it,* for *he could recite thirty-six thousand names in the same order as they were delivered, without any stay or staggering, as readily, as if he had read them out of a book.*[6]

Nathaniel Wanley[7] gives twenty-nine instances for the most part of men who have benefited themselves and others by their power of retention of books, laws, figures, names, etc., of which I may cite as relevant those notable examples of

[1] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 21, 105, 8. [2] Nisbet, *op. cit.* 255. [3] *Ib.* [4] *Life,* Isaak Walton. (1678.) K. 2, *verso.* [5] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* i, 431–2. [6] *Apologie.* (1630.) 225. [7] *Wonders of the Little World.* (1806.) i, 151–60.

Joseph Scaliger, who committed to memory the whole of *Homer* in twenty-one days; Franciscus Suarez, who had St. Augustine's works by heart; and Dr. Raynolds, who had memorized not only all *St. Augustine*, but *also all classical authors*, becoming, as he may well add, *a living library. Carmidas a Grecian, or Carneades, as Cicero and Quintilian call him, was of so singular a memory, that he was able to repeat by heart the contents of most books in a library*, as if he read *immediately out of the books themselves;* Portius Latro had so great a memory that *he needed not the assistance of books;* the famous Bishop Jewel could *repeat anything he had penned after once reading it*, and anything he had once read, no matter what difficulties it contained, barbarous or hard words, as Welsh or Irish, he could repeat *both forwards and backwards without hesitation*. Lord Bacon once read to him the last clauses of ten lines in Erasmus's *Paraphrase* in *a confused and dismembered manner*, but after a small pause he rehearsed *all those broken parcels of sentences the right way*, without stumbling. Neoptiamus, cousin of Heliodorus the Bishop, by continual reading *made his bosom a Christian library*, so that in disputation and familiar conference, if any man *cited a testimony, he could straight know from whence it was*, this from Tertullian, that Cyprian's, another from Lactantius; Theodorus Metochites was another *living library and, as it were, an oracle, where a man might know all he desired;* our own Thomas Fuller had so great a memory that he could name *in order all the signs on both sides the way from the beginning of Paternoster Row at Ave-Maria Lane, to the bottom of Cheapside*, and he could *dictate to five several writers at the same time, on as many different subjects*, a faculty which many might envy in the hurrying days of these later times.

But they in some measure are all exceeded by the account of Jerome of Prague, *the same that was burnt alive in the council of Constance*, who after three hundred and forty days *in the bottom of a stinking and dark tower*, where *he could neither read nor see*, yet alleged so many testimonies from the most learned and the wisest persons in favour of his tenets, cited so many fathers of the Church, as might have sufficed had he

had their books with him. Of Magliabecchi the librarian of Florence, of whom I shall speak more opportunely in another place, he discourses at length, but I shall only name here that reference he makes to his head, which became *an universal index of both titles and matter*. As a final example, I may conclude with that account of Lipsius, who remembered the whole of *Tacitus*, and pledged himself to recite word for word any passage required of him, consenting to allow a person to stand by him with a dagger, and to plunge it into his body should he fail to repeat the exact words. And now may it please your good worships to find, if you desire them, more of such marvels in *Wanley*.

V. OF LETTER FERRETS AND BOOK SOTS

I have sufficiently illustrated the power and fascination of study, and have also done so more at large in my sections of Reading and Readers. Many will not believe all such stories to be true, but laugh commonly, and deride them when they read them, but let these men consider with themselves how many marvels are recounted daily, nay hourly, throughout the world in the popular press, and that every day it is being proved to them that there are more things in Heaven and Earth than are dreamt of in their philosophy. But what more marvellous than that, as I have already hinted, so beneficent a faculty as study should not be wholly good, so many several ways are we plagued by ill-seeming and ill-usage, that even faculties excellent in themselves may become vanity and vexation of spirit.

The testimony of Montaigne[1] may not unfitly be added, for he has a whole essay *Of Pedantisme*, the chief defect of scholarship, and in his *vulgar Perigordin-speech doth verie pleasantly term such selfe-conceited wisards*, or pedants, *letter-ferits*, book-struck men, to whom *letters have given a blow as with a mallet*. The shoemaker and the plain husbandman simply and naturally plod on their course, speaking only of what they know, and no farther: *whereas the letter-puft*

[1] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 158–9.

pedants, because they would faine raise themselves aloft, and with their literall doctrine which floteth up and downe the superficies of their braine, arme themselves: they utter loftie words, and speake golden sentences, but so that another man doth place, fit, and applie them; all theory, no practice; *they are acquainted with Galen but know not* the *disease;* their heads are stuffed with Laws, but they cannot handle the case. *If Books,* Lucian[1] admonished such a student, *have made you what you are, you ought of all things to avoid them;* for, as Bacon[2] reckons it up, *to spend too much time in studies is sloth; to use them too much for Ornament is affectation.*

Hobbes bragged that his own reading was inconsiderable, but *if he had spent as much time in reading as other men of learning, he should have been as ignorant as they.*[3] Petrarch is of the same opinion. He reproves a professor of Bologna for roving through volumes which are strange to him in order to insert extracts in his lectures, so that, *stunned by the names of countless writers,* his pupils think him *omniscient;* but real scholars, he warns us, are not to be deceived, *they can tell what is borrowed or begged or stolen, and know the difference between a deep draught from any writer and a passing sip.*[4] Such a letter-ferret, or thief of phrases, lives by making apophthegms *serve him for wit,* seldom making any joke, says John Earle,[5] *but which belonged to some Lacedemonian or Roman in Lycosthenes; he is like a dull carrier's horse, that will go a whole week together, but never out of a foot pace;* so that *he that sets forth on the Saturday shall overtake him.* He is no more than a *Pretender to Learning,* a scholar-mountebank, *who never talks anything but learning, and learns all from talking,* like Sir Thomas Overbury's pedant,[6] who *never had meaning in his life, for he travelled only for words,* a Heteroclite wanting *the plural number, having only the single quality of words.*

A true scholar, philosopher, man of letters, will not *pester his brains with idle punctilios and cavils,*[7]

[1] Qt. Elton, *Great Book-Collectors.* 5. [2] *Essays,* 'Of Studies'. [3] D'Israeli, *Cur. Lit.* ii, 179. [4] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 32–3. [5] *Microcosmography,* 'A Plodding Student'. [6] *Characters,* Overbury. [7] W. de Britaine, *Human Prudence.* 2.

> Old puns restore, lost blunders nicely seek,
> And crucify poor Shakespeare once a week;[1]

such *superfine, curious sort of learning signifies no more than a splendid foppery, to no manner of purpose*, and we are no better for *studies that furnish us with unactive thoughts, and useless discourse.*[2] Students of this sort are mere parrots of scholarship, ossified academics, who miss the blossoms in a hedge of prickles. *They cannot see the wood for trees. How many have I seene in my daies*, exclaims Montaigne,[3] *by an over-greedy desire of knowledge, become as it were foolish?* by which means, as Joseph Glanvill follows it (read his *Scepsis Scientifica*, xvii),[4] their *vain Idolizing of Authors* and *the silly vanity of impertinent citations, inducing Authority in things neither requiring, nor deserving it*, produces *ridiculous fooleries. 'Tis an inglorious acquist*, he supposes, *to have our heads or Volumes laden, as were Cardinal Campeins his Mules, with old and useless luggage. Methinks 'tis a pitiful piece of knowledge, that can be learnt from an Index; a poor ambition*, he well says, *to be rich in the Inventory of another's Treasure. To boast a memory (the most that these Pedants can aim at) is but an humble ostentation.* He desires, rightly, to be a *Fountain* rather than a *Hogshead*, and claims that 'tis better to own a Judgement, though but with a *curta supellex* of coherent notions, than a memory, like *a Sepulchre, furnished with a load of broken and discarnate bones.* And he concludes with *what is more perpendicular to* his *discourse*, that *if we impartially look into the remains of Antique Ages, we shall find but little to justify so groundless a Tyranny as Antiquity hath impos'd on the enslaved world.*

VI. A CURE FOR PEDANTRY

Pedantry is the dotage of knowledge: *much learning doth make thee mad.*[5] The remedy is to mingle your knowing with being; to lose yourself in your book, not for the sake of the losing but for the sake of the discovery, or rediscovery of a self replenished with vitality, by reason of its experience. Such

[1] Pope, *Dunciad*. i. First Ed. [2] W. de Britaine, *op. cit.* [3] *Essays*, Ed. Seccombe. i, 199. [4] Ed. John Owen. 120–2. [5] *Acts*. xxvi, 24.

adventures re-acquaint us with ourselves new furnished by our rich experiences, rapt beyond ourselves yet more ourselves because we have gone forth into others, whether better or worse than we are is no matter so long as they are alive. *What we should read is not the words*, says Butler, *but the man whom we feel to be behind the words.*[1] The words are nothing in themselves. The letter killeth. Words, like facts, observations, etc., are expedients, and a book (whatever other purpose it may have, and I shall show many) is, in this context, a doorway which you open, going out or in as needs be: sallying forth upon an adventure or homing to the same end, for whether we go back or forth, out or in, we come back to the same spot—the citadel of ourselves. Learning can do no more than point at the harbour, it cannot bring us into port, or, for that matter, get us out; understanding only can do that:

> Knowledge is proud that he has learn'd so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more.[2]

To make books, therefore, the mere and sole tools of knowledge is to misuse them. That way lies pedantry. The best that is in a book comes out to us only when we enter into its spirit; and in a bookish jurisdiction the spirit of letters is an essence of life; if we have the luck to meet it on equal terms we come near to living, so

> Let 's even compound, and for the Present Live,
> 'Tis all the Ready Money Fate can give.[3]

All of which was summed up by Antisthenes when he replied to one who asked him what learning was most necessary for man's life: *To unlearn what is nought.*[4] Therefore, that which Bacon said at the opening of his essay *Of Studies* may be for ever applied to the correction of pedantry and all those defects of scholarship upon which I have dilated: *Studies serve for Delight, for Ornamentation, and for Ability. Their chief use for Delight is in Privateness and Retiring; for Ornament is in Discourse; and for Ability, is in the Judgment and Disposition of*

[1] *Note-Books.* 94. [2] Cowper, *The Task.* 94–5. [3] Cowley, 'To Dr. Scarborough.' [4] Bacon, *Apophthegms.* 177.

Business, of which he himself was a chief instance, *nihil quod tetigit non ornavit.*

When we confer with masterpieces, exchange, compare our ideas with theirs, we get most out of them, not by absorbing them wholly, or by following them implicitly, but by remaining ourselves in all our traffic with them, only better, fuller, stronger for the association. You might *read all the books in the British Museum* and remain *illiterate*, Ruskin warns, but *read ten pages of a good book with real accuracy*, and *you are for evermore in some measure an educated person;*[1] and this is what James Rhoades meant when he gave out to his students that *if they could really master the ninth book of 'Paradise Lost', so as to rise to the height of its great argument and incorporate all its beauties in themselves, they would at one blow, by virtue of that alone, become highly cultivated men.*[2] Any noble passage will serve us as well, and we could not be served better. *Masterpieces*, Quiller-Couch advises, *serve us as prophylactics of taste*, they *help us to interpret the common mind of civilisation. But*, he holds, *they have a third and yet nobler use. They teach us to lift our own souls.*[3]

This is what Montaigne[4] had in mind when he argued that study and plodding on books was a *languishing and weake kinde of motion*, which *healeth and earnesteth nothing;* whereas, *conference doth both learne, teach and exercise at once.* He only is wise *qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientiae, sed legem vitae putet quique obtemperet ipse sibi, et decretis suis pareat,*[5] whose learning is not an ostentation of knowledge, but a rule of life, which he himself obeys, doing what is decreed. Which brings us back to the central object of all endeavour, viz., how to live; and, clearly, if study is mere repetition of the ideas and sayings of others, as it was in the Middle Ages, when *the ultimate foundations of knowledge rarely went beyond knowing what somebody had said about something*,[6] then it is but a pretty game, and if so recognized, 'tis no great harm. But to know what somebody has said about something is to acquire

[1] *Sesame and Lilies.* i. [2] Qt. Quiller-Couch, *Art of Reading.* 215. [3] *Ib.* 226. [4] *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 192. [5] Cicero, *Tusc.* ii. [6] Rashdall, *Universities of the Middle Ages.* i, 433.

knowledge, not wisdom, which is the end of the matter. And in this problem of study it is wisdom to know a writer rather than his commentator. A man who has made a great book is an artist, and his book is a piece of life. A pedant is a *bookish sot*,[1] and they and their kind are to be avoided, for too many have been *frightened away from the fairest realms of poetry* (and prose) *by the fences of these grim guardians*,[2] who *aim as a rule at acquiring information rather than insight*,[3] without which learning can never be distilled into our lives.

[1] Montaigne, *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 159. [2] Hamerton, *Intellectual Life*. 385. [3] Schopenhauer, 'On Men of Learning', *Art of Literature*. Trans. Saunders. 49.

PART VIII

OF THE USES OF BOOKS

I. SOME ADVENTITIOUS USES

Many and sundry are the uses to which bookmen, students, and others put their books. All manner and conditions of folk use them for all manner of purposes. Some sell them for money, as others publish, and yet more write them or write about them to the same end. Some use them as a currency of exchange, as Gibbon, who gave a copy of the *Decline and Fall* for a hogshead of Madeira;[1] Tolstoy, in his youth, would use Tatishef's *Dictionaries* as tests of endurance, by holding them in his outstretched hand for five minutes at a time, though the feat caused him *terrible pain;*[2] George Wyndham *played* with his books and so *defied the North East wind;*[3] in the United States of America books are upheld as a means of adding to the attractiveness of women: *Any woman who knows something of literature and science, of travel and biography, will find herself becoming more and more attractive.*[4] In some lands Holy Books are used for the taking of oaths; and, in an emergency, a secular book has been used for a sacred purpose, as on that occasion, recorded by Festing Jones, when an engineer in Central America, lacking a *Bible*, married a couple of coloured folk, who spoke no English, with *Tristram Shandy*, out of which he read a chapter.[5] Others again collect books, hoarding them as men gather around them postage stamps or defunct coins, blown eggs or dead butterflies, but I have anatomized these inferior faculties in subsequent sections; so also those, of whom again there is more elsewhere, who beg, borrow, steal or even

[1] Letter to Lord Sheffield. 31.xii.1791. [2] *Life*. Maude. i, 31. [3] *George Wyndham*. Gatty. 36. [4] From an advertisement in the *Atlantic Monthly*. February 1927. p. 31. [5] *Samuel Butler: A Memoir*. 155 i, 136–7.

buy them to read, thus giving them their due homage and putting them to their proper service:

> Pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli.[1]
> The reader's fancy makes the fate of books.

At the same time they are not solely for reading; even when they are read, they are tools, companions, consolers, guides, entertainments (Fielding called the novel a *pocket-theatre*), doctors, teachers; kill-times and life-preservers; substitutes for thought; all of which uses have been touched upon briefly or at large; escapes from inconveniences, such as going into the country: Sir Leslie Stephen loved the country *best in books*.[2] The *rationale* of their utility in these respects remaineth *jucundum et anceps subjectum*, a pleasant, but a doubtful subject (as one terms it), and with brevity to be discussed. Many erroneous opinions held are about the use of books, not alone among the profane, if among that sort at all, for they would hesitate to ascribe any useful purpose to literature, or, if any, not, as they say, for *the likes of them;* rather would I impute this limitation to one or, at most, two purposes, such as study or reading, among the learned. The uses of books are much more varied, as I have noted and shall proceed further to dilate.

Mohammedans are in the habit of scrutinizing any printed or written piece of paper lying upon the ground, not knowing but it may contain some piece of their *Koran*. It was owing to the possession of a like habit that Addison was able to search out many uses for books which might else have been overlooked, *for*, as he wisely saith, *no mortal author, in the ordinary fate and vicissitude of things, knows to what use his works may some time or other be applied*. Thus a man may often meet with *very celebrated names in a paper of tobacco*. He admitted having lighted his pipe more than once *with the writings of a prelate* (a use which other books have served many times, as when Carlyle ordered Edward FitzGerald *to read, or light pipes with*, a book which he had given him[3]); and he had a friend

[1] Terentianus Maurus. [2] 'Country Books', *Hours in a Library*. iv, 102. [3] FitzGerald, *More Letters*. 149.

who was ingenious enough to convert *the essays of a man of quality into a kind of fringe for his candlesticks;* he remembered in particular, *after having read over a poem of an eminent author on a victory*, meeting with several fragments of it *upon the next rejoicing day*, employed in *squibs and crackers*, thus celebrating its subject in a double *capacity*. He once met with a page of *Mr. Baxter under a Christmas Pie*. This discovery had a notable result, for *whether the pastry-cook had made use of it through chance or waggery, for the defense of that superstitious viand*, he knew not; but *upon the perusal of it he conceived so good an idea of the author's piety* that he bought the *whole book*. He often profited by such accidental readings, coming across many pieces either out-of-print or not to be met with in the bookshops; and on the shelves of his library, among the *folios*, were two *band-boxes lined with deep erudition and abstruse literature*.[1]

The habit of using the pages of books for packing parcels was at one time popular. John Rawlinson, who bequeathed his collection to the Bodleian, *rescued* from the grocers, chandlers, etc., many rare documents, including *originals* from My Lords Bolingbroke, Oxford, Ormond, Strafford, the Electress of Hanover, Prior, etc., and on another occasion documents formerly belonging to Sir John Cooke. They were sold by his nephew's widow *to support pyes, currants, sugar, etc.*[2] Macaulay went so far as to prophesy that some of *the well-puffed fashionable novels* of 1829 would *hold the pastry* of 1830, and others, then *extolled in language almost too high-flown for the merits of 'Don Quixote'*, would *line the trunks* of 1831.[3] When Duke Humphrey's Library at Oxford was pillaged by *anti-popish vandalism*, MSS. *were sold to tailors for their measures, to bookbinders for covers and the like;*[4] these uses have several records: on the day that M. Duvergier de Hauranne, abbé of Saint-Cyran, came out of the dungeon of Vincennes, he was having himself measured for a suit of clothes, which he badly needed, when he observed that the tailor had cut out his *bandes sacrilèges* from the works of St. Augustine on *grand*

[1] *Spectator*. 85. [2] *Annals of the Bodleian*. Macray. 239–40. [3] 'Mr. Montgomery's Poems.' *Essays*. [4] Macray. *Op. cit.* 13.

papier, que le cardinal Richelieu avait fait saisir dans la prison de son diocèse.[1] Read in *Isaac D'Israeli*[2] how ancient Manuscripts have been used for covering the drums of battledores, patching clothes, bookbinding, etc., for there is no end to their ingenious uses in the service of man, some of which I shall now set out.

II. BOOKS AS FURNITURE

As furniture they have been widely esteemed in divers places, through many ages: *ils meublent mieux que tout.*[3] People *decorate their rooms with the furniture that was intended to be an ornament of the soul, as if they were bronzes and statues;*[4] they employ them as the accessories of a *Chippendale suite*, which is *glorified by the presence of these mute embodiments of brainwork and energy;*[5] *some covet to have libraries in their houses, as ladies have cupboards of plate in their chambers, only for show; as if they were only to furnish their rooms, and not their minds.*[6]

> The lettered fop now takes a larger scope,
> With classic furniture, designed by Hope,
> (Hope, whom upholst'rers eye with mute despair,
> The doughty pedant of an elbow chair).[7]

We know *the gaudy volumes that repose at all the points of the compass*[8] on the drawing-room tables of apartment houses, in the rooms of doctors and dentists where *patients bide their time sadly*. Some books are *intended for ornament*, manufactured for decoration, born furniture, destined for show; but even then *no furniture so charming as books*, claims Sydney Smith,[9] *even if you never open them, or read a single word;* and when they are *not made for furniture, nothing else so beautifully furnishes*

[1] Janin, *Le Livre*. 464–5. [2] *Cur. of Lit.* i, 34–5. [3] 'They furnish better than anything.' Octave Uzanne, *Zigzags d'un Curieux*. 205. [4] Petrarch, *On Fortune*. Qt. Elton. *Great Book-Collectors*. 45. [5] *Book-Lore*. 139. [6] Waller, *Divine Meditations*. [7] Ferriar, *Bibliomania*. 112–15. [8] P. Fitzgerald, *Book Fancier*. 123. [9] *Memoir*. Holland. i, 241.

a house, the plainest row of cloth or paper-covered books is *more significant of refinement than the most elaborately-carved* étagère *or sideboards*. Another will have *a house furnished with books rather than furniture;*[1] John Bright prefers a room well *stocked with books to* any *decoration which the highest art can supply.*[2]

Some range them with bric-à-brac, knick-knacks, articles of *virtu*, in domestic collections; others with ornaments, setting them on the tops of pianofortes, in parlour windows, on tables (there was once a curious trade in *table books* specially wrought for this purpose), as those Ladies of Llangollen, Lady Eleanor Butler and Miss Sarah Ponsonby, at Plas Newydd, where they lived together for fifty years without going away for a single night, surrounded, as Lockhart found, when he visited them with Sir Walter Scott, by *bijouterie*, cabinets and glass-cases, books, *whirligigs of every shape and hue;* among the books they were gratified to find illustrated copies of Scott's poems. But much as *the Ladies* delighted to have books among their *bric-à-brac*, they were sedulous readers.[3]

I speak it not to detract from such as are so virtuous and noble as to revere books for their content rather than their seeming, for I hold firmly with Sir Edmund Gosse that books are *the furniture of the mind*,[4] and I do much respect and honour students and bookmen; but this desire for books as furniture, to have them about on shelves, tables, window-sills, whatnots, overmantels, sideboards, etc., is in the nature of praise, symbolical, an inverted homage. At the same time there are strenuous opponents of this view. Seneca, for example, would have none of it. He was for reading books, not looking at them, and contemplating the luxurious unread collections of Lucullus and Mithridates, he rejoiced at the conflagration at Alexandria: *Our idle book-hunters know about nothing but titles and bindings; their chests of cedar and ivory, and the book-cases that fill the bath-room, are nothing but fashionable furniture.*[5]

[1] H. W. Beecher, *Sermons*. [2] *Speech*, at opening of Birmingham Library. [3] Ponsonby, *English Diaries*. 241–6. [4] *The Library of Edmund Gosse*. xiv. [5] Qt. Elton, *Great Book-Collectors*. 5.

Young supports him in his satire *The Love of Fame:*

> Thy gaudy shelves with crimson bindings glow,
> And Epictetus is a perfect beau.
> How fit for thee bound up in crimson too,
> Gilt, and like them, devoted to the view!
> Thy books are furniture. Methinks 'tis hard
> That science should be purchased by the Yard,
> And T——n, turned upholsterer, send home
> The gilded leather to fit up thy room.

Nevertheless, the taste is widespread, and the commerce of book-selling is ready to meet it, even in so great a seat of learning as Oxford: *We can offer*, so runs the advertisement of a dealer in books in the famous High Street of that illustrious city, *a quantity of well-bound Books, suitable as Furniture, at the following Clearance Prices: Sizes: 8vo, cr. 8vo, post 8vo, Half Calf, 1/6 per vol.; Whole Calf, 2/- per vol. Lists of Titles on application.*[1] I doubt not that such collections go to furnish those *fine houses*, of which Oliver Wendell Holmes has records, *where a library is a part of the upholstery*,[2] and such booksellers (in this respect) *little more than upholsterers*, as Horace Walpole told Sir David Dalrymple, who sell *sets* and *bodies* of arts and sciences *for furniture*, and the purchasers, he was very sure they were not readers, *but only in that view*, and although he *never thought there was much merit in reading*, he rightly argues it is *too good a thing to be put upon no better footing than damask or mahogany*.[3]

The learned Dr. Routh, President of Magdalen College, Oxford, for over sixty years editor of the *Reliquiae Sacrae*, knew better than to decorate his cupboard doors with sham books, as some do; he lined all his walls with real books: dining-rooms, drawing-room, corridors, even staircase and hall, as *Mercurius Rusticus* himself saw on his tour of research into the cause of bibliophobia, in 1830, and was gratified to note that the doctor's house *contained the same goodly book-furniture as of old—outvying, in intrinsic worth, all the velvet and silk and chintz hangings of the proudest Palace in Christendom*.[4]

[1] *Catalogue*. Sanders & Co., Oxford. May, 1927. p. 13. [2] *The Poet at the Breakfast Table*. [3] *Letters*. Cunningham. iv, 177. [4] Dibdin, *Bibliophobia*. 79.

In this wise doubtless Charles Lamb thought on his *cheerful dining-room* in Colebrooke Row near Sadler's Wells Theatre, *all studded over and rough with books*.[1] Magliabecchi, in his great passion for books, went even further: he lived in a cavern of books, slept on them, wallowed in them; they were his bed and board, his only furniture, his chiefest need. For sleep he spread an old rug over a heap of them and so composed himself; or he would cast himself, fully clothed, among the books which covered his couch.[2] In the same manner it is recorded[3] of a bibliomaniac of the early days of last century whose collection was *choice, costly, and copious*, that no man loved more *to embed himself* amongst them: his pillow-case, Columbus's *Letter* of 1493, stitched to the original *Challenge* of Crichton; his counterpane, the large paper *Hearnes*, formerly in Dr. Mead's library, *still glittering in their primitive morocco attire;* his mattress, large paper *Dugdales;* his bed-curtains, *slips of the original Bayeux Tapestry!* I know what can be said against these extravagances, and record them not for argument, still less for condemnation, but to show further how every man uses books for his own ends.

III. A DIGRESSION OF DUMMY BOOKS

To assume a virtue if you have it not is a maxim with some, and there are others who conjure the outward bearing and aspect of books with *counterfeit presentment* on shelves that are not shelves but the fancy panels of doors, and the like, as that upper shelf in a lady's library, described by Addison,[4] which was stuffed with *counterfeit books carved in wood*, serving only to fill up, *like faggots in the muster of a regiment*. I have known in my time several such panels of deception, one in a Piccadilly mansion nigh to Apsley House, and another, more vastly pretentious, in the Royal Automobile Club, a third in the Gallery of the British Museum Reading Room. How many country mansions are so decorated with dummy books I know

[1] *Charles Lamb*. P. Fitzgerald. 163. [2] *The Book Fancier*. P. Fitzgerald. 3.
[3] Dibdin, *Bibliophobia*. 50. [4] *Spectator*. 37.

not, but that there were many at one time cannot be gainsaid, for the sixth Duke of Devonshire, *desiring to construct a door of sham books, for the entrance of a library staircase at Chatsworth*, invites the help of Tom Hood in the matter of inscriptions for his *unreal folios, quartos, and 12mos*, because his own inventiveness in so delicate an engagement had failed, and he was tired of the *Plain Dealings*, *Essays on Wood*, and *Perpetual Motion* on *such doors;* on one he had seen the names of *Don Quixote's Library and other impossibilities*, as *Virgilii Odaria*, *Herodoti Poemata*, Byron's *Sermons* etc. From Hood he *ventured to hope for more attractive titles*,[1] and he received from him, says Percy Fitzgerald,[2] such titles as *Malthus's Attack on Infantry*, *Lamb's Reflection on Suet*, *John Knox on Death's Door*, *Boyle on Steam*, *On Sore Throat and the Migration of the Swallow*, *Johnson's Contradictionary*, *Cursory Remarks on Swearing*, *The Scottish Boccaccio by D. Cameron*, and many more in this punning strain. Fitzgerald gives examples of *simulacra* in the same manner covering a door in Sir Thomas Acland's library, where the dummy books bore such titles as *Friend's Right of Entrance*, *Trap on Fictitious Entries*, and, more wittily, near the hinges, *Squeak on Openings*, *Bang on Shutting*, and *Hinge's Orations*.

In the Sheraton room at Marlborough House there is (or was) a dummy library with such titles as *Lever on Lifts*, *An Actor on Falling Stars*, *The Newcomers*, *Superficial Knowledge*, *Tiresome Tomes*, *Nine Tails by a Cat*, *Constable's Notes on Motoring*, *Lochs and Quays of England*, *The Male Coach*, *Bleak Houses*, and the *Story of the Greek Kalends*. On a door in the Army and Navy Club Library, in Pall Mall, *are, or were, to be found quips in the same spirit*, as *The Rape of the Lock*, *The Art of Turning, by Handle*, *Le Livre Fermé* and *Tréatise sur les Sorties Imprévues*. Charles Dickens had a collection of sham books at Gad's Hill for which John Forster devised such titles as *The Corn Question by John Bunyan*, *Dr. Kitchener's Life of Captain Cook*, *Mr. J. Horner on Poets' Corner*, *Savage on Civilisation*, and so on. Aldous Huxley gives an account of

[1] *Memorials of Thomas Hood.* (1860.) i, 30–1. [2] *The Book Fancier.* 126–7.

the dummy library at Crome.[1] In the middle of one of the walls of the library was a door *ingeniously upholstered with rows of dummy books* concealing a cupboard where rested, among a pile of letter-files and old newspapers, the *mummy-case* of an *Egyptian* lady, brought back by the second Sir Ferdinando on his return from the Grand Tour. From a distance the books looked genuine, and bore ingenious titles, as Caprimulge's *Dictionary of the Finnish Language; A Biographical Dictionary* in parts; *Biography of Men who were Born Great, Biography of Men who Achieved Greatness, Biography of Men who had Greatness thrust upon Them*, and *Biography of Men who were Never Great at All;* then there were Thom's *Works and Wanderings*, in ten vols.; *Wild Goose Chase, a Novel*, in six vols., and seven volumes of *The Tales of Knockespotch.*

Many a briefless barrister has used dummy books to give an air of established prosperity to his chambers, and so too doctors of medicine have garnished their consulting-rooms. Maurice Hewlett dreamed once of a fair library of tall tomes, but was awakened from his pleasant adventure when he took down a volume as *big* and *hefty* as *Liddell and Scott* and found it only a box to hold papers with nothing in it but a wire clip.[2] Others use them as boxes for pamphlets, as *camouflage* for chess boards, which can be conveniently folded and stowed away on shelves. But what shall we say of those ghouls, chiefly in France, who scour the auction rooms, the booksellers' shops and the stalls, for choice and ancient bindings which they turn into boxes by gluing the pages together, cutting out the type area, and so translating books into receptacles for cigarettes, cigars, liqueurs, jewels, chocolates, *bon-bons*, or note-paper? And what of those who encourage this ghoulish trade? They are no better than body-snatchers, desecrators of the temple, vain, tawdry, callous, whether sellers of such monuments of destruction or buyers of them, biblioclasts and dolts to boot, necrophils of a sort; beside them the *naïfs* who use dummy books are princes of intelligence, nay, bibliophiles of the blood, though dizzards, for they would fox their fellows, if that be their aim, by

[1] *Crome Yellow*. xiv, 146–7. [2] *Extemporary Essays*. 118.

making boxes to look like books rather than books like boxes, as in that singular library at Warsenstein, near Cassel in Germany, where the books are boxes made of wood, as he[1] records, each a specimen from a different tree with its bark for the spine. The outsides are polished examples of the timber, and the insides contain specimens of the tree's fruit, seeds, leaves, the moss which grows upon its trunk and the insects which feed upon it. But I rage and roam. Let us to our theme.

IV. THEIR USE AS TOOLS ETC.

As tools they need no explication; that is their business: *they are not creative powers in any sense, merely helps, instruments, tools;*[2] and when bookmen alight upon those true, moving works, which *make them happy and wise*, they do well to name their books *bridges or ships* because they have carried readers safely over *dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples.*[3] In like measure they are *engines of war*, fighting men's battles in place of armies:

> The King to Oxford sent his troop of Horse,
> For Tories own no argument but force;
> With equal care to Cambridge books he sent,
> For Whigs allow no force but argument.[4]

Sir Edward Burne-Jones argued that books were of no use to a painter save *to prop up models in difficult positions*, and for that purpose he acclaimed their value;[5] so also have they been used as stools to sit upon and to raise the height of chairs. Gautier had no other use for *Plutarch* in folio than as a press for creased and crumpled engravings, or to *put under children* who would not otherwise be able to sit at table.[6] Coventry Patmore received from his father one of the *greatest rebukes* he could remember, for taking from its place *a thick old Bible to enable* him *to sit more conveniently at dinner.*[7] They have

[1] P. Fitzgerald, *The Book Fancier*. 127. [2] J. S. Blackie, *Self-Culture*. [3] Emerson, *Society and Solitude*. 'Books.' [4] Sir W. Browne. Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology*. 113. [5] *Memorials of Edward Burne-Jones*. i, 130. [6] Preface. *Les Jeunes-France*. [7] *Memoirs*. Champneys. ii, 41.

been used as presses from early times; but most of all for pressing flowers either as souvenirs or for scientific purposes. Samuel Pepys visited John Evelyn at Deptford and was shown his '*Hortus Hyemalis'; leaves laid up in a book of several plants kept dry, which preserve colour, however, and look very finely, better than any Herball.*[1]

Samuel Butler, the nimble-witted author of *Erewhon*, made careful researches into their use as writing-desks in the Reading-room of the British Museum, a sloping desk being necessary to his habit of composition. For weeks he experimented with *sundry poetical and philosophical works*, without finding his *ideal desk;* at length, *more by luck than cunning*, he lit upon Frost's *Lives of Eminent Christians*, which he found the perfection and *ne plus ultra* of *everything that a book should be*. But ill-fate befell him, for when next he visited the Museum the book had disappeared and he could not write until he had found a substitute. He tried various books: Migne's *Complete Course of Petrology*, but abandoned it because it was in several volumes of varying thicknesses and he could never remember the volume he had used; *Bede* in Giles's *Anglican Fathers*, although in four volumes, was not open to this objection, yet, for some unstated reason, inadequate; he turned, therefore, to Mather's *Magnalia*, which promised well, had not the binding displeased him. Cureton's *Corpus Ignatianum* was too thin; Baxter's *Church History of England*, Lingard's *Anglo-Saxon Church*, and Cardwell's *Documentary Annals*, though none so good as *Frost*, were deemed of *considerable merit*. Norton's *Genuineness of the Gospels* he did not like taking as it was *just possible someone may be wanting to know whether the Gospels were true or not, and be unable to find out because* he *had got Mr. Norton's book;* in the end he found Arvine's *Cyclopædia of Moral and Religious Anecdote* to be the one book in the room coming within *measurable distance of Frost*, which was fortunate for posterity, for unless he had found some successor he must have given up writing altogether.[2]

[1] *Diary.* Wheatley. v, 137. [2] S. Butler, 'Quis Desiderio', *Essays on Life, Art, and Science.* 1904. 3–11.

V. THEIR BELLIGERENT USEFULNESS

After a long and tedious discourse of these numerous material uses to which books have been put, and their several varieties, which are comprehended under Furniture, Tools, Operations, etc., I am come now at last to *horrida bella*, or that kind of purpose which is procured only by *ultima ratio regum*, the arbitrament of the sword, or gun, of which there are several records. Many fear the power of books, as I have shown under *Influence*, and that they have proved a *casus belli* is well known; but such cavillers will belike find less to censure in this record of their armigerous use as the munitionment of war. C. and M. Elton, in their description of book-collecting in Ireland,[1] make mention, amongst other matters, of the dispute over the copying of St. Finnen's *Psalter* by St. Columba, *who was passionately devoted to books*. St. Finnen claimed the copy as his, and when St. Columba appealed to King Diarmid, at the Court of Tara, the King upheld St. Finnen's claim on the ground that to every mother-book belongs the child-book, as to the cow belongs her calf. St. Columba was so enraged that he went over the wild mountains and raised the tribes of Tyrconnel and Tyrone and a great battle was fought in which King Diarmid was defeated. When Columba went to Iona he took his *Psalter* with him and bequeathed it to the chieftain of the tribe of Tyrconnel. It was then called the *Book of the Battle*, and if they carried it three times round the enemy in one day, they were certain of victory.

Their value as life-preservers against projectiles and other engines of war hath sundry instances. Many stories tell how books have stopped bullets in their swift and deadly course, and turned the points of swords. But it would seem that only Holy Books, and of our own Faith, are thus to be relied upon. I have no documentary evidence in support of such stories, nor have I discovered any one among my acquaintances who could give me an authentic instance out of his

[1] *Great Book-Collectors*. 17.

own experience in the Great War, which had such a profusion of marvels, so I shall do no more than record the rumour, which is as persistent as a legend, and as readily believed by many. That experienced observer Dr. Rosenbach is not among them, in spite of the fact that so many *bullet-hole Bibles* have been offered to him that his rest has been broken by dreams of armies charging him, *each soldier wearing a protecting copy of the Holy Scriptures over his heart.*[1]

Whether they have proved successful as armour or not, they are no despicable munitionment of war in other respects. As weapons they have *done their bit*, most effectively, as when Dr. Johnson knocked Osborne down with a folio, because that notorious bookseller had blamed his learned and diligent employee for negligence. The historic volume, so Sir Leslie Stephen records, a copy of *Biblia Graeca Septuaginta*, 1594, was in the possession of a Cambridge bookseller as late as the year 1812. Few will dispute with Stephen when he urges that so desirable an *association* copy *should have been placed in some safe author's museum.*[2] Another instance of the use of books as weapons is recorded by Anthony Trollope, whose father often knocked him down with a *great Folio Bible* as a punishment for youthful idleness.[3] As missiles they are widely appreciated, lending themselves as they do both by reason of their size and shape to sudden precipitation at an offending head. Another Johnson, William (Cory), used them in this manner. He threw a book at any boy in his class at Eton who was either *flagrantly unoccupied or suspiciously absorbed;*[4] and it is reported that William Morris hurled a fifteenth-century quarto (which was so precious that he would allow no one to touch it) at the head of a person who had irritated him, and with such force that in the course of its militant career it knocked the panel out of a door.

Even in warfare on a larger scale they are of proved value, as Wilfrid Scawen Blunt discovered when attacked by the Senussi in the Egyptian desert, whither he had journeyed in the hope that he might find among that remote tribe *something*

[1] *Books and Bidders.* 239. [2] L. Stephen, *Johnson.* 27. [3] *Autobiography.* World's Classics Ed. 14. [4] In *Lit. Anec. of 19th Cent.* ii, 400.

of the better traditions of Islam which he could not find in *more civilised Mohammedan lands*. But the Senussi, believing him to be a spy, attacked, captured and robbed his caravan, and it was only by adopting passive tactics, until he could advise the Sheiks of his English nationality, that he was permitted to escape with his life. He attributes this manœuvre to Doughty's *Arabia Deserta*, which he had been reading on the journey.[1]

VI. CHARMS AMULETS AND FORTUNE-TELLERS

Amulets and things to be borne about for luck, or to charm a life by warding off the blows of Fate, Chance, the Evil Eye, or the Devil himself, I find prescribed in histories; and although their efficacy is taxed in these times by some, it is approved by others, but often by deed rather than by word, as many a trinket semi-jocularly worn can attest. The medicinal value of amulets is now generally denied by civilized people, who have transferred their faith to drugs and serums, and their allegiance to vaccinations, operations, and therapeutical religious ceremonies.

The power of books to charm is, however, well known, and they have largely taken the place of amulets. In times past amulets were included in the medical equipment of all classes. Samuel Pepys carried a *hare's foot* against the colic; although he sometimes doubted whether that amulet relieved him or whether he should attribute *the relief to taking every morning of a pill, of turpentine, or to having left off wearing of a gown*.[2] His doubts were set at rest later when, on January 20th, 1665, he brought home a hare and Mr. Batten showed him that it was necessary to carry a hare's foot that *hath not the joynt to it*, assuring him that he himself had *never had his cholique since he carried it about him. It is strange*, says Pepys, *how fancy works, for I no sooner almost handled his foote but my belly began to be loose and to break wind, and whereas I was in some pain yesterday and tother day and in fear of more to-day,*

[1] W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*. i, 273. [2] *Diary*. 31.xii.1664.

I became very well, and so continue. Next day he was *mighty well* and attributed it to his *fresh hare's foot.* But he was again in doubt on March 26th, when he *never was better in his life,* though the winter had been hard, and he had gone lightly clad *wearing only a doublet, and a waistcoate cut open on the back; abroad, a cloake, and within doors a coate I slipped on. I am at a losse,* he admits, *whether it be my hare's foot which is my preservative against wind;* but he takes no risks and continues to carry it.

Robert Burton[1] gives several curious instances. Precious stones are useful for most diseases; a wolf's dung borne with one helps the cholick, a spider is good for an ague, a ring made of the hoof of an ass's right fore-foot carried about has recognized medical value, and he gives instances which he contends, with Renodus,[2] are not altogether to be rejected. And he recounts how Levinus Lemnius set down certain amulets, herbs, and precious stones, which have marvellous virtues all *profligandis daemonibus,* to drive away Devils and their illusions. He agrees, however, with Michael Palaeologus, that *a sheep or a kid's skin, whom a wolf worried,*

Haedus inhumani raptus ab ore lupi,[3]

ought not at all to be worn about a man, because it causes palpitation of the heart, not for any fear, but a secret virtue which amulets have; and he doubted his mother's ability to cure an ague by an amulet of *a spider in a nutshell lapped in silk.* She had excellent skill in chirurgery, but of all experiments he thought this one most *absurd and ridiculous.* He could see no warrant for it, till at length rambling amongst authors (as he often did) he found this very medicine in *Dioscorides,* approved by Matthiolus, repeated by *Aldrovandus, cap. de aranea, lib. de insectis,* and so *began to have a better opinion of it.* But he still believed that such medicines are *to be exploded that consist of words, characters, spells, and charms, which can do no good at all, but out of strong conceit, as Pompanatius proves; or the Devil's policy, who is the first founder and teacher of them.*

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 289–90. [2] *Pharmacopœia.* lib. i, 12.
[3] 'A goat snatched from the jaws of a cruel wolf.' *Martial.* x, 48, 14.

Whether he would include books in this castigation is not set forth, but perhaps not, for books have so many strange powers that no one so wise as mine author would dispute their magic, even as amulets, for as such they have been and still are used. There are many instances of the efficacy of the *Bible*, the *New Testament*, and the *Koran* against perils, accidents, and diseases, and among the Norsemen, Lubbock reports, *runes were supposed to be endowed with miraculous powers*.[1] I find a memorable modern instance of book-magic in the chronicle of *Lawrence in Arabia*, by Lowell Thomas. Nearly all Arabs, he says, carry some sort of good-luck charm, and the belief in *jinn* and *genii* is still common; the talisman worn by Auda, a great Bedouin Chief, *was probably one of the most extraordinary to be found in all Arabia*. It was a diminutive copy of the *Koran*, no more than one inch square, for which he had paid the sum of £200. Auda used it as his sole protection against snake bites, the only danger which fills a Bedouin with fear. He displayed his treasure with great pride to Lawrence, who discovered it had been printed in Glasgow and published for eighteenpence.[2]

Sortilege, the casting of Lots, has been promiscuously performed by nearly all peoples at most times; and, notwithstanding cavils and objections, many writers both ancient and modern do much approve of it, and they are stiffly supported by primitive peoples as well as by cultured sects in London, New York, Paris, and elsewhere, who seek news of their fate by gazing into *crystals*, casting of *horoscopes*, fortune-telling, *Palmistry*, *Phrenology*, *table-rapping*, *handwriting*, *Mediums*, and the like; as from all time men have practised *Haruspication*, or divination by entrail-gazing; *Scapulomancy*, by the shoulder-blade or *scapula; Angang*, from meeting with ominous animals; and *Astrology* from the stars, consulting them as Plato and Pythagoras did when they left their country to confer with those wise *Egyptian Priests*, and as Apollonius travelled in Ethiopia and Persia to consult with the *Magi*, *Brachmanni*, and *Gymnosophists*. The Queen of Sheba thus came to visit Solomon; and many

[1] *Pleasures of Life*. i, 54. [2] *With Lawrence in Arabia*. 195.

others, so Hierome records,[1] went a thousand miles to behold eloquent Livy, as countless pilgrims still journey to Rome and Mecca, and some of our own contemporaries, as Edward Carpenter and Annie Besant, have journeyed to sit at the feet of *Gurus* in Ceylon and *Mahatmas* in Hindustan.

For divination they have sought out many inventions and curious enterprises. Homer's heroes prayed to the Gods when they cast *Lots* in *Agamemnon's cap*, and Mopsus *divined* with sacred *Lots* when the Argonauts embarked. Pliny decided to repair and enlarge the Temple of Ceres, which stood upon his estate in Tuscany, *in compliance with the advice of the Haruspices*, or entrail-gazers.[2] The Emperor Julian took public part in the ceremonies of Haruspication: *Amidst the sacred but licentious crowd of priests, of inferior ministers, and of female dancers, who were dedicated to the service of the temple, it was the business of the Emperor to bring the wood, to blow the fire, to handle the knife, to slaughter the victim, and, thrusting his bloody hands into the bowels of the expiring animal, to draw forth the heart or liver, and to read, with the consummate skill of an Haruspex, the imaginary signs of future events.*[3] Tacitus recounts how the Germans invoked the Gods by small pieces of wood cut from a fruit-bearing tree conjointly with the auguries of bird-song or flight. Horses, too, were mediums (read *Herodotus* iii, 84, for the neighing of King Darius his horse) or, as Tacitus hath it: *kept at the public expense in these same woods and groves are white horses, pure from the taint of earthly labour. These are yoked to a car and accompanied by a priest and the king or chief of the tribe, who note their neighings and snortings. No augury so trusted by priests or people. The priests are the ministers of the Gods, and the horses are acquainted with their will.*[4]

Similarly *dice* are thrown for purposes of *sortilege*. The *astragali* or knucklebones, used of old times in children's games, were first instruments of divination. In Polynesia the *coco-nut* is spun like a *teetotum* to discover a thief.[5] They hope by sorcery, spells, incantations, etc., to *dip into the future*, to

[1] Praefat. bib. vulgar. [2] 'Haruspicum monitu', *Letters*. Melmoth. Loeb Ed. ix, 39. [3] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, xxiii. [4] *Germania*. Trans. Donne. 48. [5] *Encyclopædia Britannica*. VIII, 333.

expound the mysteries of life, to receive guidance when the way is dark. They *read* all these *charms, totems, talismans, amulets*, as we now read books, for they were the precursors and progenitors of books. I think Sir James Frazer is wise in his inference that Joseph *piqued himself on his power of detecting a thief by means of his divining cup;*[1] though how he did it we know not. But people have *read* the mysteries in cups as in crystals, and this mode of divination is still practised in Egypt, where it is associated, thus supporting my contention, with the written word, as some of our own simple womenfolk think of what is written or what may be written when they essay to read the dregs left in their tea-cups.

The Greeks made predictions by *Hydromantia* or the reading of water. In Egypt this same process is still called the *Magic Mirror*, and Frazer cites,[2] out of *Klunzinger*, how it is employed in our days: *A pure innocent boy (not more than twelve years of age) is directed to look into a cup filled with water and inscribed with texts, while under his cap is stuck a paper, also with writing on it, so as to hang over his forehead; he is also fumigated with incense, while sentences are murmured by the conjurer.* Anon the boy claims to see images of persons on the water as in a mirror. He is then ordered to make demands of these spirits, to set up a tent, bring coffee and the like, and after a while to command from the *vasty deep* of the cup (for vast and deep it is, being a mystery) any person living or dead. This he proceeds to attempt.

Nearer to *book-magic*, to which I am proceeding, is that substitution of ink for water which was poured into the diviner's hand and thus used for detection of the living, or for *Necromancy*. The only good diviners from ink are pure young boys, black female slaves, or pregnant women, but boys are most commonly employed. *A magic square is drawn with ink in the palm of his hand, and in the centre of the square a little pool of ink serves as the magic mirror. While the diviner gazes in it, incense is burnt, and pieces of paper with charms written on them.* When Kinglake was in Cairo (Frazer relates out of *Eothen* xviii) he asked a Magician, a stately old man

[1] *Folk-Lore in the Old Testament.* ii, 426. [2] *Ib.* ii, 427–8.

with flowing beard, vast turban and ample robes, to exhibit his skill. This he set out to do by employing a boy to gaze into *a blot of ink in his palm and there* to descry the image of any person the Englishman might name. Kinglake would have Keate, his old Eton master, *a ferocious dominie of the ancient school, short in figure and in temper, with shaggy red eyebrows and other features to match*, to appear. In response to this call, the youthful diviner professed to see in the inky mirror the image of a fair girl, golden-haired, blue-eyed, pallid of face and rosy of lip. Kinglake's laughter so discomfited the Magician that, *perceiving the grossness of his failure*, he declared *the boy must have known sin (for none but the innocent can see truth), and accordingly kicked him down stairs.*[1] But why do I digress? If you desire to know more, particularly of what this *Magic* is, how it influences, how it fascinates (for, as all hold, it still does fascinate both men and women), read it in Frazer, his *Golden Bough*, Rivers, Perry, etc., etc.

Somewhat different are the *omens* to be drawn from books and the method of drawing them. Divination by books is called *Bibliomancy*,[2] and is reckoned by many a branch of *Necromancy*. It was much practised in the Middle Ages as Scott and Tennyson have recorded in the *Lay of the Last Minstrel* and the *Idylls of the King*. Alphonsus of Aragon, saith Bacon (*Apophthegms*), *was wont to say of himself that he was a great necromancer, for that he used to ask counsel of the dead: meaning books.* The British Museum Reading-room is *a city of necromancers*, an *Heraclea*, in which they raise the dead, says Bulwer-Lytton:[3] *Do I want to speak to Cicero? I invoke him. Do I want to chat in the Athenian market-place, and hear news two thousand years old? I write down my charm on a slip of paper, and a grave magician calls me up Aristophanes, etc.; it is a world beyond the grave, a land of ghosts.* A library, according to Henry Ward Beecher,[4] is but *the soul's burial-ground, the land of shadows;* which George Crabbe supports in his poem of *The Library:*

> With awe, around their silent walks I tread;
> These are the lasting mansions of the dead.

[1] *Eothen.* (1852.) xviii, 188. [2] Rogers, *Manual for Bibliography.* 161.
[3] *The Caxtons.* [4] *Star Papers*, 'The Bodleian Library'.

A book is never a masterpiece, it becomes one. Genius is the talent of a man who is dead,[1] and when a lover of books sits in his library, he is conscious of the company of friendly geniuses who speak to him out of the grave; as Whittier's magnate among his books:

> The old, dead authors thronged him round about,
> And Elzevir's grey ghosts from leathern graves looked out.

Joseph Hall, in his *Occasional Meditations*, disclaims *all offence of Necromancy* when he indulges in the happiness of calling up *ancient worthies, whether human or divine;* and Dr. Johnson agrees with Alphonsus of Aragon that *dead counsellors are safest*, because *death puts an end to flattery and artifice*, so that *the information we receive from books is pure from interest, fear and ambition.*[2] But from early times they have consulted these dead—

> My days among the dead are past—[3]

hoping to divine something of the hereafter, or guidance in some present dilemma:

> Studious let me sit,
> And hold high converse with the mighty dead.[4]

Many books have been used for magical purposes, but chiefly the *Bible*, *Homer*, and *Virgil*. In all the intercourse of man with books nothing is more remarkable than the *Sortes Virgilianae*, which I essay apart, but there is a temptation, an instinct, towards *sortes bibliothecae*, in all bookmen.

> Therefore will I turn my Magic books,
> And strain out Necromancy to the deep.[5]

The love of *lucky dipping* into books promotes an involuntary observation of coincidences and chances in textual openings, which attract the interest even of those least inclined towards magic. *In going into a great library*, Professor Playfair told Miss Berry,[6] *it often occurs to me to take up some remarkable*

[1] Edmond and Jules de Goncourt. [2] *Adventurer.* 137. [3] Southey, *Occasional Pieces.* xviii. [4] James Thomson, *The Seasons.* 430–31. [5] R. Greene, *Honourable History of Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay.* [6] *Miss Berry's Letters.* Lewis. II, 294–5.

book, open it by chance, and observe what turns up, as the truths thus carelessly suggested live long in the memory. That day in the University Library, he took up the *Theatrum Cometicum*, and the first sentence was: *Causa cometarum maxime universalis est Deus.*[1] The *truism* was all he got for his pains, and it was the only piece of instruction he was likely to carry away from Cambridge; but he consoled himself by thinking *some have perhaps gone away with less.* If Maurice Hewlett[2] had wished to try the *sortes* not of Fate but of Conduct, *Montaigne* would have been his oracle. *Here*, he says, *is a reflection which should have been found by unhappy Habsburg or Hohenzollern in* 1914; *'C'est le déjeuner d'un petit ver, que le cœur et la vie d'un grand et triomphant Empereur.'*[3] *God knows what the digestion of that might have saved us.*

Spartianus, in his *Life* of the Emperor Hadrian, discourses of the custom of the ancients to inquire after Futurity by the haphazard opening of the leaves of Homer and Virgil. Afterwards the Christians, *retaining some remnants of the Pagan superstition*, thought to be mighty clever in preserving the custom of making the *Holy Scriptures*, especially the *Psalms*, take the place of the Pagan classics; *and what is more surprising, if we may credit Agrippa* (c. 4 of his *Vanity of the Sciences*), several members of the Sorbonne in his time approved of this *two-fold piece of impiety*. The custom spread to France in the days of the early kings, when three books of the *Bible:* the *Prophets*, the *Gospels* and the *Epistles of St. Paul*, were first placed on the altar, or the shrine of some Saint, and they *maturely considered* those parts of the text revealed at a first opening which were germane to their wishes. This custom was abolished by Louis the Debonair, Art. 46, *ut nullus in psalterio, vel evangelio, vel aliis rebus sortiri praesumat, nec divinationes aliquas observare.*[4] Thus far in general; I now turn to more particular instances.

[1] 'The most universal cause of comets is God.' [2] *Extemporary Essays*. 121. [3] 'The heart and the life of a great and triumphant Emperor are nothing but the breakfast of a little worm.' [4] 'That no one shall presume to draw lots in the Psalms, or the Gospel or anywhere else, nor observe any divinations.'

VII. HOW PANTAGRUEL EXPLORES THE SORTES VIRGILIANAE

In three admirable chapters of *Rabelais*,[1] the illustrious Pantagruel excogitates the whole business of the *sortes* bearing upon the prophetic virtues of both *Homer* and *Virgil* in the matter of Panurge's desire for marriage. These cogitations, and those of the precedent chapter, are an epitome of the frailty and bewilderment of human reason, for with the best will to deny the *sortes*, those who are experienced of the world, and honest withal, cannot but see that there are arguments *pro* and *contra* in every case, whether taken *a posteriori* or *a priori*. This is seen to no better advantage than in the famous joust where Panurge, after fetching from the bottom of his heart a very deep sigh, took counsel of his lord and master, Pantagruel, whether he should marry, yea or nay. In the great discourse which succeeds, marriage, its joys and sorrows, trials and tribulations, tricks, dangers, sorties, caprices, as well as its conveniences, pleasantries, and comforts, are so laid bare by disquisition and ratiocination, that, although Pantagruel advises him *to it*, and concludes his final tilt, after swaying this way and that way after every encounter, with: *Marry then, in the name of God!* Panurge is still bewildered. *Your counsel*, quoth he, *under your correction and favour, seemeth unto me not unlike to the song of Gammer Yea-by-nay: full of sarcasms, mockeries, bitter taunts, nipping bobs, derisive quips, biting jerks, and contradictory iterations, the one part destroying the other.* But divining that he had resolved to make a trial of the state of marriage, Pantagruel told him that there was nothing now for Panurge to do but bow his head, kiss the ground, put the business to a venture and give it a fair hazard, *recommending the success of the residue to the disposure of Almighty God.* It was not in his power to give any other assurance, or otherwise to certify what should ensue on the undertaking. *Nevertheless, if it pleases you*, Pantagruel advises, *this you may do. Bring hither Virgil's 'Poems' that*

[1] *Works*. Bohn Ed. Trans. Urquhart and Motteux. iii, 10–12.

after having opened the book, and with our fingers severed the leaves thereof several times, we may according to the number agreed upon between ourselves, explore the future hap of your intended marriage. For frequently, by a Homeric lottery, have many hit upon their destinies.

How they would cast their *Virgilian Lots* caused further argument. Panurge was for abandoning the book and finding a more expedite adjustment of destiny by the chance of three fair dice-throws. Pantagruel would have none of that, for *that sort of lottery is deceitful, abusive, illicitous, and exceeding scandalous.* Furthermore it had been forbidden by his father, Gargantua, over all his kingdoms and dominions. He argued that the fortunate cast of Tiberius, within the fountain of Appona, at the oracle of Gerion, was one of *those baited hooks by which the devil attracts and draweth unto him the foolish souls of silly people into eternal perdition.* But to satisfy Panurge's humour in some measure, he will compromise by throwing three dice upon the table, the number of spots cast up marking the verse of that page which in the setting open of the book he shall have hit upon. They proceeded according to this decision.

Panurge was attacked by nervous fears, when the *Works of Virgil* were brought in, his heart beat with violence and his pulse so quickened that he asked Pantagruel if he would not hold it expedient before they proceeded farther, to invoke Hercules and the Tenetian goddesses who are said to rule over Lots. *Neither him nor them,* answered Pantagruel, *only open the leaves of the book with your fingers and set your nails to work.* He did so. The dice cast up sixteen, and at the sixteenth line of the disclosed page Panurge encountered the following verse:

> Nec Deus hunc mensa, Dea nec dignata cubili est.
>
> The God him from his table banishèd
> Nor would the Goddess have him in her bed.[1]

This response, quoth Pantagruel, *maketh not very much for your benefit or advantage: for it plainly signifies and denoteth, that your*

[1] *Eclogues.* iv, 63.

wife shall be a strumpet, and yourself by consequence a cuckold. And he continues in the following deductions: That the Goddess whom Panurge shall not find propitious nor favourable unto him is Minerva, a most redoubtable and dreadful Virgin, a powerful and fulminating Goddess, an enemy to cuckolds and effeminate youngsters, to cuckold-makers and adulterers, and much more lusty stuff of the kind, until he bids him try his fortune for the second time, when he falls upon this verse:

> Membra quatit, gelidusque coit formidine sanguis.
>
> His joints and members quake, he becomes pale,
> And sudden fear doth his cold blood congeal.[1]

This importeth, quoth Pantagruel, *that she will soundly bang your back and belly. Clean and quite contrary,* answered Panurge, *it is of me that he prognosticates, in saying that I will beat her like a tiger, if she vex me. Sir Martin Wagstaff will perform that office, and in default of a cudgel, the devil gulp him, if I should not eat her up quick, as Candaules the Lydian King did his wife, whom he ravened and devoured.* Thereafter did he hit, at the third opening of the book, upon this verse:

> Femineo praedae et spoliorum ardebat amore.
>
> After the spoil and pillage, as in fire,
> He burnt with a strong feminine desire.[2]

This portendeth, quoth Pantagruel, *that she will steal your goods and rob you. Hence this, according to these three drawn lots, will be your future destiny. I clearly see it,—you will be a cuckold, you will be beaten, and you will be robbed.*

But since they were nowise in agreement, and as a last refuge and in the hope of a surer remedy, Pantagruel claimed that they should abandon their expounding of the *Virgilian Lots,* bend their course another way and try a new sort of divination. *Of what kind?* asked Panurge. *Of a good and authentic fashion,* answered Pantagruel, *it is by dreams,* the efficacy of which is clearly described by Hippocrates, Plato, Plotinus, Iamblichus, Synesius, Aristotle, Xenophon, Galen, Plutarch, Artemidorus, Valdianus, Herophilus, Q. Calaber,

[1] *Aeneid.* iii, 30. [2] *Ib.* xi, 782.

Theocritus, Pliny, Athenaeus, and others, but *de his satis*, read him in Book III of *Rabelais*, where he treats *Of the Heroic Deeds and Sayings of the Good Pantagruel*, a most delectable excursion.

VIII. OF THE *SORTES* IN ANCIENT AND MODERN TIMES

Give me but a little leave, and I will set before your eyes a fair number of examples common to the ancients and those nearer our own times which go further to prove how men have resorted to books for purposes of divination. One, which many will recall, recounts what befell during the visit of King Charles I to the Bodleian in 1642, and is given by Macray[1] out of Welwood's *Memoirs*. The King being at Oxford during the Civil Wars, went one day to see the Public Library, where he was shown, among other Books, a Virgil nobly printed and exquisitely bound. The Lord Falkland, to divert the King, would have his Majesty make a trial of his fortune by the *Sortes Virgilianae*, which everybody knows, and I have shown, was a usual kind of augury some ages past. Whereupon the King opening the book, the period which happened to come up was that part of Dido's imprecation against Aeneas:

> At bello audacis populi vexatus et armis,
> Finibus extorris, complexu avulsus Iuli,
> Auxilia imploret, videatque indigna suorum
> Funera; nec, cum se sub leges pacis iniquae
> Tradiderit, regno aut optata luce fruatur,
> Sed cadat ante diem mediaque inhumatus arena.[2]

> Yet let a race untam'd, and haughty foes,
> His peaceful entrance with dire arts oppose
> Oppress'd with numbers in th' unequal field,
> His men discourag'd, and himself expell'd,
> Let him for succour sue from place to place,
> Torn from his subjects, and his son's embrace.
> First let him see his friends in battle slain,
> And their untimely fate lament in vain:

[1] *Annals of the Bodleian.* 96–7. [2] *Aeneid.* iv, 615 *seq.*

> And when at length the cruel war shall cease,
> On hard conditions may he buy his peace.
> Nor let him then enjoy supreme command,
> But fall untimely by some hostile hand,
> And lye unburied in the common sand.[1]

It is said King Charles seemed concerned at this accident, and that the Lord Falkland observing it, would likewise try his own fortunes in the same manner, hoping he might fall upon some passage that could have no relation to his case, and thereby divert the King's thoughts from any impression the other might have made upon him. But the place that Falkland stumbled upon was yet more suited to his own destiny than the other had been to the King's, for it contained the exclamations of Evander upon the untimely death of his son Pallas:

> Non haec, O Palla, dederas promissa parenti,
> Cautius ut saevo velles te credere Marti!
> Haud ignarus eram, quantum nova gloria in armis
> Et praedulce decus primo certamine posset.
> Primitiae juvenis miserae! bellique propinqui
> Dura rudimenta![2]

> O Pallas, thou hast fail'd thy plighted word,
> To fight with reason, not to tempt the sword.
> I warned thee, but in vain, for well I knew
> What perils youthful ardor would pursue;
> That boiling blood would carry thee too far,
> Young as thou wert in dangers, raw to war.
> Oh! curst essay of arms, disastrous doom,
> Prelude of bloody fields and fights to come.[3]

No copy of *Virgil*, says Macray, answering the description of this volume is now in the Bodleian, and Archbishop Bancroft, in one of his MS. *Note Books* in the Bodleian Library (Li. 29), assigns Windsor as the *locale* of the story. *There goes a story that Charles I a little before the Rebellion, being at Windsor, the company agreed to take their lots out of Virgil.* The King's was this:

> At bello audacis populi vexatus et armis, etc.

[1] Dryden, *Aeneid.* iv, 881. [2] *Aeneid.* xi, 152 *seq.* [3] Dryden, *Aeneid.* xi, 230.

A third report, vouched for by Aubrey, *the gossip-monger*, would have that the casting took place at Paris, and the Prince of Wales, not the King, was chief party to it.

So much for history, but it is all one, whether King or Prince, Oxford, Windsor, or Paris, for all three cities and many princes have resorted to Virgil, Homer, etc., when their destinies were at stake; as those of more humble station in most ages, like Robert Herrick, in *The Ebb Tide*,[1] would roam about his South Sea Island with *Virgil* his only companion. He would dip into the *Aeneid*, seeking *sortes; and if the oracle* (as is the way of oracles) replied with no very certain or encouraging voice, *visions of England at least would throng upon the exile's memory: the busy schoolroom, the green playing-fields, holidays at home, and the perpetual roar of London, and the fireside, and the white head of his father. For it is the destiny of those grave, restrained and classic writers, with whom we make enforced and often painful acquaintance at school, to pass into the blood and become native in the memory; so that a phrase of Virgil speaks not so much of Mantua or Augustus, but of English places and the student's own irrevocable youth.*

In like manner, as may be imagined, the *Bible* has been the medium of prophecy for many good men, notably St. Augustine, for when he was a young man in some distress of spirit, not knowing which way to turn for comfort, he heard a mysterious voice say unto him: *Take up and read, take up and read.* After a while, finding no human origin for this command, he presumed it came from God and gat him to the Apostle's book in the presence of his friend Alypius, where he opened he read: *Not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying: but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ; and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.*[2] No further would he read, nor needed he. For, *instantly even with the end of this sentence, by a light as it were of confidence now darted into my heart, all the darkness of doubting now vanished away.*[3] He then shut up the book, and discovered all this unto Alypius, who confessed

[1] By Robert Louis Stevenson. 2. [2] *Rom.* xiii, 13. [3] *Confessions.* Trans. Watts. viii, 12.

that a like revelation was wrought in his own heart, and he requested to see what Augustine had read, and looking further found these words following: *Him that is weak in faith, receive;*[1] which he applied to himself, and with it was strengthened. This reading established the saintliness of Augustine, for he *sought no more after a wife, nor any other hopes in this world.*

Of the Homeric and Virgilian lotteries, several instances from classical times are given by Pantagruel;[2] many have thus hit upon their destinies, as is testified in the person of Socrates, who whilst he was in prison, hearing in a dream the recitation, by a beautiful woman, of this verse of Homer, said of Achilles in the Ninth of the *Iliad*,[3]

ἤματί κε τριτάτῳ Φθίην ἐρίβωλον ἱκοίμην
The third day, I at Pthia might arrive;

thereby foresaw that on the third subsequent day he was to die. Of the truth whereof he assured Crito; as Plato, *in Critone*, Cicero *in primo De Divinatione*, Diogenes Laertius, and others, have to the full recorded. The like is also witnessed by Opilius Macrinus, to whom, being desirous to know if he should be the Roman Emperor, befell by chance of lot this sentence in the Eighth of the *Iliad*[4]

ὦ γέρον, ἦ μάλα δή σε νέοι τείρουσι μαχηταί,
Σὴ δὲ βίη λέλυται, χαλεπὸν δέ σε γῆρας ὀπάζει.
Dotard, new warriors urge thee to be gone,
Thy life decays, and old age weighs thee down.

In fact, he being somewhat ancient, had hardly enjoyed the sovereignty of the empire for the space of fourteen months, when by Heliogabalus, then both young and strong, he was dispossessed thereof, thrust out of all, and killed.

Brutus bears witness to another experiment of this nature. He was willing, through this exploratory way of lot, to learn what the event and issue should be of the Pharsalian battle, wherein he perished, and casually encountered on this verse, said of Patroclus in the Sixteenth of the *Iliad*,[5]

ἀλλά με μοῖρ' ὀλοὴ καὶ Λητοῦς ἔκτανεν υἱός.
Fate and Latona's son have shot me dead.

[1] *Rom.* xiv, 1. [2] Rabelais. iii, 10. [3] 363. [4] 102–3. [5] 849.

Accordingly 'Apollo' was the field-word in the dreadful day of that fight. Divers notable things of old have likewise been foretold and known by casting of Virgilian lots, and, in matters of no less importance than the obtaining of the Roman Empire, as it happened to Alexander Severus, who, trying his fortune at the said kind of lottery, did hit upon this verse written in the Sixth of the *Aeneid*,[1]

> Tu regere imperio populos, Romane, memento.
> Know, Roman, that thy business is to reign.

Within very few years thereafter he was effectually and in good earnest created and installed Roman emperor.

A semblable story thereto is related of Adrian, who, being hugely perplexed within himself out of a longing humour to know in what account he was with the emperor Trajan, and how large the measure of that affection was which he did bear unto him, had recourse, after the manner above specified, to the Maronian lottery, which by haphazard tendered him these lines out of the Sixth of the *Aeneid*:[2]

> Quis procul ille autem ramis insignis olivae,
> Sacra ferens? Nosco crines, incanaque menta
> Regis Romani;
>
> But who is he, conspicuous from afar,
> With olive boughs, that doth his offerings bear?
> By the white hair and beard I know him plain
> The Roman king.

Shortly thereafter was he adopted by Trajan, and succeeded to him in the empire. Moreover, to the lot of the Emperor Claudius befell this line of Virgil, written in the First of his *Aeneid*,[3]

> Tertia dum Latio regnantem viderit aestas,
> Whilst the third summer saw him reign a king
> In Latium.

And in effect he did not reign above two years. To the said Claudian also, enquiring concerning his brother Quintilius, whom he proposed as a colleague with himself in the empire,

[1] 852. [2] 809. [3] 265.

happened the response following, in the Sixth of the *Aeneid*,[1]

> Ostendent terris hunc tantum fata,—
>
> Whom fate just let us see,
> And would no longer suffer him to be.

And so it fell out; for he was killed on the seventeenth day after he had attained unto the management of the imperial charge. The very same lot also, with the like misluck, did betide the Emperor Gordian the younger. To Claudius Albinus, being very solicitous to understand somewhat of his future adventures, did occur this saying, which is written in the Sixth of the *Aeneid*,[2]

> Hic rem Romanam, magno turbante tumultu
> Sistet; eques sternet Poenos, Gallumque rebellem.
>
> The Romans boiling with tumultuous rage,
> This warrior shall the dangerous storm assuage;
> With victories he the Carthaginian mauls,
> And with strong hand shall crush the rebel Gauls.

Likewise when the Emperor D. Claudius, Aurelian's predecessor, did with great eagerness research after the fate to come of his posterity, his hap was to alight on this verse in the First of the *Aeneid*,[3]

> Hic ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono.
>
> No bounds are to be set, no limits here.

Which was fulfilled by the goodly genealogical row of his race. When Peter Amy, the friend of Rabelais, did in like manner explore and make trial, if he should escape the ambush of the hobgoblins,[4] who lay in wait all-to-bemaul him, he fell upon this verse in the Third of the *Aeneid*,[5]

> Heu! fuge crudeles terras, fuge littus avarum!
>
> Ah flee the bloody land, the wicked shore!

which counsel he obeying, forthwith avoided all their ambuscades.

Were it not well to shun prolixity, I could enumerate a hundred such like adventures, which, conformable to the dictate and verdict of the verse, have by that manner of lot-casting befallen the curious researchers of them. Do not you

[1] 870. [2] 858. [3] 278. [4] i.e. Cordeliers. *Rabelais.* Bohn Ed. *n.* i, 522. [5] 44.

nevertheless imagine, lest you should be deluded, that I would, upon this kind of fortune-telling, infer an uncontrollable and not-to-be-gainsaid infallibility of truth. I say no more than that it has comforted men in all ages since the birth of books. Among our own people, and others, *pricking the Bible* for luck or prophecy has been an old wives' custom this long time. And among those who go down to the sea in ships and seek business in great waters the *sortes* are still consulted out of any handy volume. One such instance has been given me by a sailor from his own observation, in which the crew of a ship cast lots for treatment *all round* to strong drink, by stabbing the pages of a book with a knife, the one cutting at an agreed letter nearest the first A on the left-hand page paying for the drinks.

The latest recourse to the *sortes* I can find in times present is recorded of Mr. Stanley Baldwin, when Prime Minister.[1] He confessed to having himself used the *Oxford Dictionary* for this purpose, finding in it much enlightenment on Cabinets and politics, as where *Cabinet councils* are defined as *a remedy worse than the disease*. But after events proved the inefficacy of this form of prophecy when the *Dictionary* told him that girls are *naturally timid, prone to dependence, but born Conservatives*, for at the next election the Conservative Party was given its quietus, if all I read be true, by the girls he himself had enfranchised, who were so bold and independent as to vote for the revolutionaries. I have thus far digressed and may certainly conclude my account of this strange conceit or superstition by declaring it *astrum hominis*, and if books are thus made the rudder of our ship, which most argue reason should steer, it is no more than a further tribute to the immemorial tradition of their power, the *medium deferens* of that faith by whose means they have worked and produced prodigious effects. As such phantasies are more or less intended or remitted, and their humours disposed, so does the soul of man move, more or less, and take deeper impression of life and time.

[1] Speech at the Dinner on the completion of the *New English Dictionary*. Goldsmiths' Hall. 6.vi.1928. *Times*, 7.vi.1928.

PART IX

OF THE BIBLIOPHAGI OR BOOK-EATERS

I. A DIET OF BOOKS CONSIDERED

Diet, Διαίτήμα, *Victus*, or Living, is concomitant with all functions, whether *natural* or *artificial;* and if some, as they say, *live to eat,* we must all *eat to live,*

> We may live without poetry, music and art;
> We may live without conscience, and live without heart;
> We may live without friends; we may live without books;
> But civilized man cannot live without cooks.[1]

The argument holds, whether we are concerned for the preservation of the body, the mind, or the soul, for cook and poet are alike: *the art of each lies in his brain.*[2] Each must be nourished on a proper diet for the retention of its form and the maintenance of its condition in the first place, and the increase or expansion of its power in the second:

> The things we eat by various Juice controul
> The Narrowness or Largeness of our Soul.
> Onions will make ev'n Heirs or Widows weep,
> The tender Lettice brings on softer Sleep.
> Eat Beef or Pye-crust if you'd serious be:
> Your shell-fish raises Venus from the Sea:
> For Nature that inclines to Ill or Good,
> Still nourishes our Passions by our Food;[3]

and following our poet, that renowned authority, Brillat-Savarin, laid it down that it was part of the business of gastronomy to consider *how food may influence the moral nature of*

[1] Owen Meredith, *Lucile*. i, 2.

[2] οὐδὲν ὁ μάγειρος τοῦ τοιητοῦ διαφέρει·
ὁ νοῦς γάρ ἐστιν ἑκατέρῳ τούτων τέχνη.
Euphron, in *Athenaeus*. Loeb Ed. i, 7–8. [3] King, *Art of Cookery*. 71.

man, his courage and his perceptions, whether awake or asleep, in action or repose.[1]

I have read many treatises to this purpose, but nowhere do I find any serious study of the dietetics of literature, or any evidence of research into this curious subject. All references are *en passant*, as in Peignot his *Dictionnaire de Bibliologie*, where a *Bibliophage* is noted as signifying *celui qui mange des livres*, and with this bare recognition he passes on. *We are not*, Hill Burton complains,[2] *favoured with any examples explanatory of the kind of books most in demand by those addicted to this species of food, nor of the effect of the different classes of books on the digestive organs;* but he does not attempt to remedy the defect, and as no other authority has done so, I have therefore adventured upon this section, bringing together my notes, specimens and deductions for the benefit of those who would understand more clearly the dietetic relationship of books to men. I shall assemble many observations to show that books are food, libraries *so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates*,[3] and that we eat them from love or necessity, as other foods, but most from love, and for that reason the bibliophagi may be ranked among the first of bibliophiles.

Perhaps it is easier than Voltaire believed *to pass from people kissing to people eating one another*,[4] for, as James Thomson gives out, cannibals may be the only *real lovers of their fellowmen*,[5] and on this basis the bibliophagi may be the best lovers of their fellow-books. We may contemplate the idea with fortitude, since the performance up to now has been, in the main, of a metaphorical character, or, if it is more tangible than that, there being no smoke without fire, the will has not yet discovered a way towards a more precise interpretation of the passion. Which is well, especially for our *rariora*, although there is fodder enough in the commoner sort of contemporary books; but since these might not be deemed edible, it is fortunate that the practice has not been pressed to its logical conclusion, for, as Voltaire said of cannibalism, *if we were*

[1] *Physiologie du Goût.* Trans. Anderson. 32. [2] *Book-Hunter.* 207. [3] Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 102. [4] *Philosophical Dictionary*, 'Cannibals'. [5] *Poems, Essays, and Fragments.* 260.

allowed to eat our neighbours, we should soon eat our countrymen, which would be rather unfortunate for the social virtues.[1]

Joseph Hall would take books and *imitate the skilfullest cooks, which make the best dishes from manifold mixtures;*[2] and Fletcher supports him with the picture of a hungry book-eater:

> If all thy pipes of wine were filled with books,
> Made of the barks of trees, or mysteries writ
> In old moth-eaten vellum, he would sip thy cellar
> Quite dry, and still be thirsty. Then for's diet,
> He eats and digests more volumes at a meal,
> Than there would be larks (though the sky should fall)
> Devour'd in a month in Paris.[3]

Whether the inscription on the portal of the Library at Alexandria was, as Diodorus reports, *The Medicine of the Mind*, or as some others would have, *The Nourishment of the Soul*, it is all one, as who shall estrange soul from mind, or say in what finally body differs from either, for we are constituents of the whole of life as well as sum-total in ourselves. *The analogy between body and mind is very general*, says Boswell,[4] *and the parallel will hold as to their food, as well as any other particular*, for, as the poet infers,

> Poets and Pastry Cooks will be the same,
> Since both of them their Images must frame.
> Chimeras from the Poet's Fancy flow,
> The Cook contrives his Shapes in real Dough.[5]

Our traffic with books is not one but many; as much gustation as devotion. At the very beginning of our pilgrimage through life we are book-fed, for, as Anatole France holds, *Grammars are but feeding bottles.*[6] *A book*, Gibbon told Lady Sheffield, *takes more time in making than a pudding;* the *Ciceros* of Leyden, Paris and Geneva are *long standing dishes;*[7] every book *a feast of reason and a flow of soul:* a *Banquet of Wit;*

> Were Horace, that great Master, now alive,
> A Feast with Wit and Judgment he'd contrive;[8]

[1] *Op. cit.* [2] 'Epistle to Lord Denny', Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 41. [3] *The Elder Brother.* i, 2. [4] *Life of Johnson.* Ed. Hill. i, 57–8. [5] King, *Art of Cookery.* 131. [6] *Pierre Nozière.* Trans. May. 119. [7] Dibdin, *Bibliophobia.* 72. [8] King, *Art of Cookery.* 129.

or more particularly that *Bachelars Banquet*, published in 1603, *wherein is prepared sundrie dainties to furnish their table.* Readers should approach literature as gourmets approach good food, for *a good dinner is brother to a good poem.*[1] After a preliminary taste of the *Bibliographical Decameron*, Isaac D'Israeli advised Dibdin that *fruits and comfits have been the 'goûter' as yet; but I shall sit down soon to a solid meal.*[2] The bibliophagi note fragrance, flavour, it is *the first flavours that make or unmake taste;*[3] whether edible, digestible; they revel in them at table as at a meal:

> But who is he, in closet close y-pent,
> Of sober face, with learned dust besprent?
> Right well mine eyes arede the myster wight,
> On parchment scraps y-fed, and Wormius hight.[4]

They devour them anywhere, as I will show. Plutarch *browsed on literature and thought*, secreting the *most valuable constituents;*[5] Hazlitt describes a human bookworm who *browses on the husk and leaves of books, as the young fawn browses on the bark and leaves of trees;*[6] Rosenbach records that *very young children eat their books, literally devouring their contents*, and he gives this as one reason for the scarcity of first editions of *Alice in Wonderland* and other favourites of the nursery.[7] Librarians of old, says another authority,[8] *ate books*, and the colour of the food *showed through*, like the green grass consumed by small green caterpillars, but in *a sort of general brown, faded colour, a little undusted around the edges;* and for writers they are nourishing, as Joseph Glanvill sufficiently declares, in his *Essay concerning Preaching*,[9] where he advises young Divines, when writing their sermons, to make use of *notions* met with in their reading, not by tying themselves to the *words of the Author*, but by digesting them into their *store of thoughts, as the various juyce of flowers is by the industrious Bee*, and so *making them enjoyable and agreeable.*

[1] *Apician Morsels.* 105. [2] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* ii, 636. [3] Joubert, *Selections.* Trans. Lyttleton. 173. [4] Pope, *Dunciad.* iii, 185–8. [5] Tucker, Intro. *Select Essays of Plutarch*, 15. [6] 'On the Conversation of Authors.' *The Plain Speaker.* (1826.) i, 96. [7] *Books and Bidders.* 186. [8] Gerald Stanley Lee, *Lost Art of Reading.* 201. [9] p. 67.

When Meric Casaubon visited the Bodleian, over three hundred years ago, what great content he had to see the numerous students *revelling at their banquet;*[1] recalling, as like as not, Cicero's claim that studies are the *aliment of youth;*[2] or, perchance, Timon of Phlius, who dubbed the Museum at Alexandria, where the great library was housed, *a bird-cage*, in order to ridicule *the philosophers who got their living there because they are fed like the choicest birds in a coop.*[3] Paterson, the bibliographer, was *highly feasted* on certain favourite passages in the *Bibliotheca Croftsiana* (1783);[4] *hungry bibliographers meet, at sales, with well-furnished purses*, saith mine author,[5] *and are resolved upon a sumptuous fare.* Books for Robert Southey were *more than metaphorically meat, drink, and clothing.*[6]

Well may some go so far as to argue that books are edible, and to serve their purpose must be eaten: *you must eat the book, you must crush it, and cut it with your teeth and swallow it;*[7] they are food and drink, accessible to the culinary art, creators of appetite, satisfiers of hunger, as Robert Herrick, the beachcomber in *The Ebb-Tide*, found his *Virgil*, which he failed to exchange *against a meal*, but which *often consoled him in his hunger*, as *Robinson Crusoe* had consoled Coleridge at Christ's Hospital, where the food was so bad that the boys' appetites *were damped, never satisfied:* the starved young poet would *crumple* himself *up in a sunny corner and read, read, read; fixing* himself *on Robinson Crusoe's Island, finding a mountain of plum cake, and eating a room for* himself, *and then eating it into the shapes of tables and chairs—hunger and fancy;*[8] thus supporting Tom Hood's contention that they even *atone for a meagre diet; rich fare on the paper for short commons on the cloth.*[9]

Long absence from bookish fare creates bookish hunger, which Gibbon discovers after prolonged abstention from reading during his service with the Militia, *amid the perpetual*

[1] *Great Book-Collectors*, Elton. 125. [2] 'Haec studia adolescenti amabunt.' Cicero, *Pro Archia.* 7. [3] Qt. *Athenaeus.* Loeb Ed. i, 22. [4] Dibdin, *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 526. [5] *Ib.* 517. [6] In a letter to G. C. Bedford. [7] Dr. John Brown, 'With Brains, Sir!', *Horae Subsecivae.* [8] *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 20. n. [9] *Letter to the Manchester Athenæum.* 1843.

hurry of an inn, a barrack, or a guard-room, he records,[1] *all literary ideas were banished from my mind;* but after this long *fast,* the longest he had ever known, he *tasted* once more the pleasures of reading, and the *hungry appetite* with which he opened a volume of *Tully* remained long in his memory. George Gissing provided against a like calamity by keeping a number of appetising books on shelves where he could get at them readily when he hungered for them.[2] Dr. Johnson was always hungry for books. At Mr. Dilly's, on 15th April, 1778, Boswell mentions[3] how he seized upon Charles Sheridan's *Account of the Late Revolution in Sweden,* and *seemed to read it ravenously, as if he devoured it;* during dinner he kept the book *wrapped up in the table-cloth in his lap, from the avidity to have one entertainment in readiness when he should have finished another;* resembling, he says, *a dog who holds a bone in his paws in reserve, while he eats something else which has been thrown to him.*

II. VARIETIES OF BOOK-EATERS

Bibliophiles are gastronomes, gourmets, gourmands, epicures; Elton calls Du Fay *an epicure of learning;*[4] Leigh Hunt had a dainty gusto *like an epicurean over a choice dish,* he tasted his books with a *doting* and *succulent relish.*[5] Narcissus Luttrell was *voracious in his bibliomaniacal appetites,*[6] and in the pathological stage they are *helluones librorum,* book-gluttons like Matthias Corvinus, King of Hungary, who had the largest library in Europe, and was derided for *a mere gourmandiser of books,* voracious, of indiscriminate appetite. Bookmen taste, chew, masticate, nibble, ingustate, devour, gorge, cram; they are subject to appetite and repletion; starving, over-eating, the one reacting upon the other, and thus precipitating indigestions and dyspepsias. Richards notes such a result from a

[1] *Memoirs,* Hill. 140. [2] *The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 145. [3] *Life,* Hill. iii, 284, 285. [4] Elton, *The Great Book-Collectors.* 197. [5] Percy Fitzgerald, *Charles Lamb.* 17. [6] Dibdin, *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 426.

condition of poetic starvation, where the sufferer *swallows* all the poetry he can *for a while, hoping that it will do him good, and improve his taste;*[1] but gorging, whether of poetry or puddings, induces bad digestion, not good taste. *Critics*, Arnold Bennett observes, *have been known to contract mortal 'occupational diseases' of the mind from a steady diet of bad books.*[2] Better be selective and moderate, for thus only is safety to be found. *Taste is still conditioned by the palate*, says Garrod, and *a safe diet makes a clean palate. Shakespeare and Milton and Wordsworth are*, he says, *a clean diet.*[3] *Do not overfeed us with Anecdotes of Books*, a friend warned Dibdin when he began his *Reminiscences;*[4] too much book-food *over-charges Nature*, saith Jeremy Collier,[5] *and turns more into disease than Nourishment. 'Tis Thought and Digestion which makes Books serviceable*, giving health and vigour to the mind:

> Who readeth much, and never meditates,
> Is like a greedy eater of much food,
> Who so surcloys his stomach with his cates,
> That commonly they do him little good;[6]

as Edward in *Waverley*, who, like *the epicure who only deigned to take a single morsel from the sunny side of a peach*, read only so long as a book amused him, and then on to another, and so nibbling, until *the passion for reading, like other strong appetites, produced by indulgence a sort of satiety.* Francis Osborne[7] advocates a few books *thoroughly digested* rather than *hundreds but gargled in the mouth;* John Locke[8] counsels as much: it is necessary to be of the *ruminating kind; not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections, unless we chew them over again, they will not give us strength and nourishment;* Quintilian supports him in this when he gives out[9] that only the best writers are to be read, and that when a *volume is finished, it is to be gone through again from the beginning.* For the rest we may ignore those testy and choleric cavillers whom Sir John Harrington so well confutes out of *Martial:*

[1] *Practical Criticism.* 312. [2] *Evening Standard.* 21.viii.1930. [3] *Profession of Poetry.* 265. [4] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* Preface, v. [5] 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays.* [6] J. Sylvester, *Tetrasticha.* [7] *Advice to a Son.* [8] *Conduct of Understanding.* [9] *Inst. Or.* x, 1, 20.

> The readers and the hearers like my books,
> And yet some writers cannot them digest;
> But what care I? for when I make a feast,
> I would my guests should praise it, not the cooks.[1]

For the most part authors of books will agree with him, but all critics are not literary dyspeptics, some, and they as like as not among the best, are peptonisers of otherwise tough works; the book-tasters, or *reviewers*, of Saxony and Pomerania, in Richter's times were called *praegustatores* because they *eat a mouthful of every book beforehand, and tell the people whether its flavour be good.*[2] They roll fine phrases over the palate as they would any other dainty: *no morsel more delicious than a ripe book;*[3] better taste it kindly, than gulp it down freely. Poetry for them is like wine with fragrance and *bouquet* in its fine vintages; these are true *gourmets*, and among them stand most notable Charles Lamb and Leigh Hunt, who *both literally feasted on books*, they desired *the taste of certain delicious volumes to linger on their palates, as the memory of sweet dishes does on that of other men's. They enjoyed the flavour of a rare passage of poetry with an exquisite relish, as though it were a morsel of ripe and juicy fruit.*[4]

Some books are tough, others tender (how many a tender ballad have young lovers devoured!); some green, others ripe; some hot, others cold; some raw, but most are cooked, fit for all manner of dishes; and so let the bookman *rove, like a bee, from flower to flower*,[5] sipping what is sweet, picking and tasting where he will, according to whim, inclination, as Lipsius approves, *delibare gratum de quocunque cibo, et pytissare de quocunque dolio jucundum*, to taste of every dish and sip of every cup, which, saith Montaigne, was well performed by Aristotle and his own learned countryman, Adrian Turnebus, or as Elizabeth Barrett Browning, when a child, ransacked and ravaged a garret-room *piled high* with cases of books:

> Like some small nimble mouse between the ribs
> Of a mastodon, I nibbled here and there.[6]

[1] *Epigrams.* ix, 82. [2] *Analecta from Richter*, De Quincey. [3] A. B. Alcott, *Concord Days*, 'Books'. [4] Percy Fitzgerald, *Lamb.* 195–6. [5] Dibdin, *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 73. [6] *Aurora Leigh.*

That indiscriminate book-eating exists in all ages I have no doubt, and the learned historian, Guglielmo Ferrero, holds[1] that in times present *a wolfish, insatiable hunger for printed paper and reading matter is the scourge of our civilisation.* Yet when bookmen overfeed is not easily decided: where one starves another waxes fat: *if a diet of contemporary sonnets leaves you hungry*, Lionel Johnson prescribes[2] Drayton's *Polyolbion;* that some eat more than others is inevitable, but what sufficiency one discommends another approves. John Hill Burton expostulates[3] against *a course of reading* which is no more than *a course of regimen for dwarfing the mind, like the drugs which dog-breeders give to King Charles spaniels to keep them small.* Anthony Wood called Robert Burton *a devourer of authors;* it was necessary, another gives out, that the Mendicant Friars, in the Middle Ages, should be *devourers* of books if they were, as they wished, to become *monopolists of learning;*[4] but at all times bookmen have been good trenchermen at the literary table, especially and more properly in their young days, as healthy youths with other viands. John Stuart Mill thus *devoured treatises on Chemistry*, especially that of *his father's early friend and schoolfellow, Dr. Thomson.*[5] When a youth, Sir Edmund Gosse was employed as a *transcriber* in the Printed Book Department of the British Museum, and in those days *great laxity prevailed among the assistants and the librarians*, so that among the younger clerks cricket was practised *in remoter galleries* whilst *less audacious spirits cultivated the pencil and the jews'-harp.* Young Gosse did not join in these excitements: his diversion was *ceaseless devouring of the printed page.*[6]

Cato, says Petrarch, had an *insatiable hunger for books*, to which Cicero bears witness in his *Letters to Atticus;* and Petrarch himself had a like appetite: *one unquenchable longing has the mastery of me, which hitherto I neither would nor could repress; 'tis an insatiable craving for books, although, perhaps, I already have more than I ought;*[7] but whether his hunger constituted a

[1] *Ancient Rome and Modern America.* 56. [2] *Post Liminium.* 215. [3] *The Book-Hunter.* 110. [4] Elton, *Great Book-Collectors.* 31. [5] *Autobiography.* 17. [6] *The Library of Edmund Gosse.* xv. [7] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 36–7.

bulimy or inordinate appetite, as that which men, as Nicholas Wood,[1] have for viands, is not stated; some others have come nearer to a Gargantuan reading, as Heber, who had a *book-appetite* of *cormorant-capacity*,[2] whilst Magliabecchi, whose chronic book-hunger I dilate apart, was truly called *the Glutton of Books;*[3] in this there is as little virtue as in any other form of gluttony, as in the satiric poet:

> Large Justice Greedies, who will gormandize
> At city feasts, till they can barely rise!
> Or drink strong wines, till off their seats they fall
> Flat on the floor,—and cannot rise at all![4]

But it may be (as R. L. Stevenson states) that in books as in viands, it is only *in a chosen few that any man will find his* appointed food.[5] *He who eats too much, knows not how to eat;*[6] he who reads too much knows not how to read.

III. THE PHYSIOLOGY OF BOOK-EATING
GOURMETS *v.* GOURMANDS

Bibliophagi should be *gourmets* rather than *gourmands*, they must eat to live, and avoid the condition of those of whom he[7] said *in solo vivendi causa palato est*,

> Men whose sole bliss is eating, who can give
> But that one brutal reason why they live,

for, as Brillat-Savarin rightly holds, *in compelling man to eat that he may live, Nature gives appetite to invite him, and pleasure to reward him.*[8] *It needs a strong head to bear that diet*, says Emerson, of all good books; and, again, that, although we expect a great man to be a good reader, *assimilating power* should be in proportion to *spontaneous power*.[9] Dryden's aphorism to the same end supposes it *impossible even for a good*

[1] *The Great Eater of Kent*, John Taylor. 1630. [2] Dibdin, *Bibliophobia*. 93. [3] *The Book Fancier*, Fitzgerald. 3. [4] *The Craniad*. 27. [5] 'The Influence of Books', *The Art of Writing*. 89. [6] Brillat-Savarin, *Physiologie du Goût*. Trans. Anderson. xxxvi. [7] Juvenal. [8] *Physiologie du Goût*. Trans. Anderson. xxxvi. [9] 'Quotation and Originality', *Letters and Social Aims*. 130.

Wit to understand the proprieties and delicacies of English, without *the help of a liberal Education, long Reading, and digesting of those few good authors we have amongst us.*[1] Books (argues the Critic in Petrarch's treatise *on Fortune*) *have led some to learning and others to madness, when they swallow more than they can digest;* for sometimes the best of them are sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly, as St. John the Divine found after he had *ate up* that little book which he took from the open *hand of the Angel which standeth upon the sea and upon the earth.*[2] Jeremy Collier demonstrates[3] with a solid argument in a just essay that *a Man may as well expect to grow stronger by always Eating, as wiser by always Reading. Too much over-charges Nature, and turns more into Disease than Nourishment. 'Tis Thought and Digestion which makes Books serviceable, and gives Health and Vigour to the Mind;* it was sound of Neoptolemus, in *Ennius,* to advise *ex philosophia cenet, non in eam ingurgitandum,* tasting better than gorging, for

> Knowledge is as food, and needs no less
> Her Temperance over appetite, to know
> In measure what the mind may well contain;
> Oppresses else with surfeit, and soon turns
> Wisdom to folly, as nourishment to wind.[4]

You must, in a phrase, *read, mark, learn and inwardly digest,* for, as Mary Coleridge well said, *the fruits of the tree of knowledge are various,* and *he must be strong indeed who can digest all of them;* she herself only learnt this after *vainly endeavouring to get* her *teeth through the sour apple of science, to crack the hard nuts of philosophy,* when all that she was fit for was *to gather up the stray blossoms that fell in the spring.*[5]

Dr. Johnson was able to *gorge books, tear the hearts out of them,* as Leslie Stephen[6] records, with small risk of dyspepsia; Milton, *the most learned of our poets, from his childhood upwards was a devourer of Greek and Latin books, of the romances of the Middle Ages, of French and Italian poetry, above all of the Hebrew*

[1] *Sylvae.* Pref. [2] *Revelation.* x, 9–10. [3] 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays.* ii, 199. [4] *Paradise Lost.* vii, 126. [5] *Gathered Leaves.* 8–9. [6] *Samuel Johnson.* 6.

Scriptures;[1] Leigh Hunt was *a glutton of novels,*[2] and survived to an advanced age; Hazlitt *fell early upon French Romances and devoured them tooth and nail,*[3] and, he adds, *I made many a dainty repast of the 'New Eloise'*. Dibdin, always a mighty eater of books, *fell upon* Warton's *History of English Poetry, absolutely devoured* it, and then took Ellis's *Specimens of English Poetry* as *a lighter or second course in the intellectual banquet;*[4] Mark Pattison gobbled Gibbon's *Autobiography,*[5] with great content; and Washington Irving observed readers in the British Museum falling upon *ponderous tomes, tooth and nail with famished voracity.*[6]

Grant Duff regarded Lord Acton as a mere *Helluo librorum*, but Henry Jackson found that learned nobleman capable of forming *a keen, sound and independent judgment* on all he *saw, heard or read.*[7] Edward FitzGerald was a hearty though temperate book-eater, he would gourmandise only off certain books or, when time with a favourite was short, as when he was staying with a friend in Bedford, he took up Boswell's *magical book*, a dish he delighted in, and *could have sat down and read it all through right on end*, but being at that house for two days, he *could only devour two days' worth of it;*[8] but he believed that heavier fare was necessary in certain circumstances, as when marooned in an unfamiliar place, away from one's own books; a goodly row of the *Annual Register*, which, he asserts, *may be found in every country town*, is not amiss; 'tis not easily exhausted, *so long as there is appetite, there is food: and of that plain substantial nature which, Johnson says, suits the stomach of middle life.*[9]

The Rev. Frederick Ekins tells Dibdin[10] that although he is enjoying the *Bibliographical Tour in France and Germany*, he does not *gulp his food* but takes it *quietly like a good boy;* George Hibbert, on the other hand, takes delight in *a solitary*

[1] F. D. Maurice, *Friendship of Books.* 14. [2] *Life*, Monkhouse. 35. [3] 'On Reading Old Books', *Plain Speaker.* ii, 71. [4] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* i, 224–5. [5] *Memoirs.* 129. [6] 'Art of Bookmaking', *Sketch Book.* [7] *Henry Jackson, O.M. A Memoir*, Parry. 124. [8] *Some New Letters of Edward FitzGerald.* 129–30. [9] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 72. [10] *Reminiscences.* ii, 686.

and gluttonous monopoly, of the same book.[1] But lesser men only imitate the vagaries of genius at their peril. A varied diet, moderately taken, is indicated by those who have brought great knowledge and wide experience to bear upon this theme, as John Hill Burton:[2] Even Gibbon's *Decline and Fall, luminous and comprehensive as its philosophy is, and rapid and brilliant the narrative, will become deleterious mental food if consumed straight through without variety;* relieve it with Boston's *Fourfold State*, or Hervey's *Meditations*, or Sturm's *Reflections*, or *Don Juan*, or Ward's *History of Stoke-upon-Trent*. But those who may consider the remedy worse than the disease will prefer to agree with Heath when he sings in his *Praise of Books:*

> A few good books, digested well, do feed
> The mind; much clogs, or doth ill humours breed.

Let us digest them! otherwise they enter our memory, but not our mind;[3] James Howell, in his *Familiar Epistles*, subscribes to this opinion, where he discommends gorging yourself with *multiplicity of authors: two*, he claims, *is enough upon any science, provided*, he saith, *they be plenary and orthodox* (which is more than needs, too much orthodoxy is nought); Thoreau[4] relates as much of the transcendental philosophy of Carlyle, which *needs the leaven of humour to render it light and digestible;* the same may be said of theology, which is not easily assimilated, especially by the young, as Edmund Gosse knew, his father causing him much pain by cramming him with *theological meat* which it was impossible for the lad to digest.[5] But they are all agreed that nothing pesters the mind so much as to be stall-fed, to eat and ingurgitate beyond all measure, as many do, and, if rightly understood and favourably interpreted, would support a further claim that Philosophy should be your substantial food, Poetry your banqueting stuff. So let us take by proxy those Gargantuan feasts or monotonous repasts, being ready, on occasion, as Joubert advises, even *to breathe Plato* rather than *feed upon him.*[6]

[1] *Reminiscences.* ii, 679. [2] *The Book-Hunter.* 111. [3] Seneca, *De Tranq. An.* 9. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 5. [4] 'Carlyle and his Works', *Essays.* Scott Lib. Ed. 161. [5] Gosse, *Father and Son.* 90. [6] *Selected Thoughts.* Trans. Lyttleton. 181.

A correspondent of Birkbeck Hill assured him that on their first appearance he *lived on* Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese*,[1] and Charles Lamb confessed to Landor that he lived upon *Rose Aylmer* (a poem of only two verses) *for weeks;*[2] nor is a whole book or a complete poem required at all times for sustenance; many have kept body and soul together, as the saying is, on a sentence or other concentrated passage, as Edward FitzGerald, who found the *last sentence* of J. M. Kemble's article on the *Government of Russia*, in the *British & Foreign Review* (1840), *meat and drink* to him *for a fortnight.*[3] But, in the end, it is the manner rather than the matter that counts: *est quiddam gestus edendi.*[4] Lockhart's *Scott* made Stevenson ill,[5] and Thomas Hood, wisest and wittiest of the bibliophagi, recounts that when on a journey in Germany his good English stomach revolted against such coarse food as they set before him, but he suffered not at all so long as he could get his *Peregrine Pickle*, and though he did not yearn *towards calf's hèad à la tortue or sheep's heart*, he could still relish *Head à la Brunnen and 'The Heart of Midlothian'*.[6] All are *contenti in hac animi voluptate, quam pascunt per volumina varia devagando et liguriendo:*[7] happy in the luxury which they nourish by ranging and browsing among the diverse volumes of an abundant store of books; so may we approve without desiring to emulate Hazlitt, who sought to browse like a sheep or a rabbit, preferably on folios, revelling in pastures rich with *fat and large* tomes which he had *scarcely strength to lift, folios* as *solid as they were heavy, and if dull, full of matter;*[8] but others prefer to feast, perchance, upon such books as the *Anecdotes of Painting* and the *Castle of Otranto*, which Horace Walpole sent on Christmas Eve, 1764, to George Montagu as *food* for his fireside,[9] and if we cannot always avoid excess, we may recall with advantage that, as Cicero observes, it is the

[1] *Talks about Autographs.* 85. [2] *Letters.* Everyman. ii, 305. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 67. [4] 'There is much in one's mode of eating.' Ovid, *Ars Amatoria.* iii, 755. [5] *Letters.* Ed. Colvin. i, 301. [6] Letter to the Manchester Athenæum. 1843. [7] Geyler, *Navicula sive Speculum Fatuorum.* 1511. B. iiij. rev. Qt. Dibdin, *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 651. [8] Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 181. [9] *Letters,* Cunningham. iv, 306–7.

distinction of man to seek ever for a law of good taste, a measure for his words and deeds;[1] as it is in the invitation of the poet:

> What neat repast shall feast us, light and choice,
> Of Attic taste . . . .[2]

IV. A DISSERTATION UPON APPETITE

In reading, as in eating, an appetite is half the feast,[3] but Isaac D'Israeli argues that there is a literary appetite which the author can no more impart than a skilful cook can give appetency to the guests at a banquet;[4] and well he may, for books are their own appetisers. They need no sauce, not even so great a masterpiece as that one invented by Chirac, *with which*, it is said, *it might be held excusable for a man to eat his own father.*[5] He is no true bookman who has to be wheedled into reading, as Homeric heroes were tempted to drink by grating cheese and onion into their wine.[6] Bibliophiles need no synthetic appetite. When Thackeray was a boy his hunger for books was keen and insatiable: *It may be the tart was good; but how fresh the appetite was!*[7] *I need no allurement for sauce*, said Montaigne, *my stomach is good enough to digest raw meat.* He disparages all preliminary forcing of the appetite; such *preparatives, flourishes, preambles*, etc., have a contrary effect on him: *they thinke to sharpen my taste, or stir my stomacke*, but *they cloy and make it wallowish.*[8] Appetite is keen, even when the dish is familiar, as William Hazlitt testifies:[9] *when I take up a work I have read before (the oftener the better) I know what I have to expect; satisfaction is not lessened by being anticipated;* but a new book arouses suspicion like *a strange dish.* He would *turn and pick out a bit here and there*, doubtful of the composition: *there is a want of confidence and security to second appetite*, but with old familiar books he knows his *palate* will not be *nauseated.*

[1] *De Officiis.* i, 4. [2] Milton, *Sonnets.* xx. [3] Anon. Qt. *In Praise of Books.* 4. [4] *Misc. of Lit.* [5] T. L. Peacock, 'Gastronomy and Civilization', *Works.* ix, 391. [6] *Iliad.* xi, 639. [7] *Roundabout Papers.* [8] 'Of Bookes', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii, 119. [9] 'On Reading Old Books', *The Plain Speaker.* ii, 65.

A grace, as Charles Lamb affirmed, might be appropriate before a literary feast, but extraneous *apéritifs* are not necessary as for a coarser diet where the gastronomic engines must be tuned up by cocktails. A healthy reader needs no *Martinis* (dry or sweet), *Manhattans*, *Bronxes*, or such-like *tickle-tastes*. Books are their own *apéritifs*. Appetite comes with reading, as Angeston declared of eating.[1] Petrarch ordered his brother to *ransack Tuscany* for books *to appease* (*or shall I say*) *to whet my thirst;*[2] and so true bookmen devour book after book *with appetite whetted to a swallowing-point perfectly gluttonous*.[3] Dr. William King complains to a friend who has advised him of the publication of Lister's treatise, *De Condimentis et Opsoniis Veterum*, without sending him a copy, that *you have made my mouth water, but have not sent me wherewithal to satisfy my appetite;*[4] and when William Blades saw the title-pages of the poems of Taylor, *the Water Poet*, in the album of a biblioclast, they made his *mouth water for the books themselves*.[5] George Wyndham, says Gatty,[6] *loved nothing better than to browse among the pages of his facsimile First Folio; the sight of the old type whetted his appetite for the intellectual feast;* and after *wallowing in the sixteenth century*, and *hankering after the thirteenth*, like an *archaistic barbarian*, he developed *a still ruder relish for the pagan horseflesh of the Sagas;*[7] and, some, as Landor, are made keen by a reverse process:

> After Byron's peppery dishes
> Matho's mild skim milk goes down.[8]

Yet too much pepper is condemned by some authorities, as Henry Jackson,[9] who recognised that there are *some people whose palates require pepper* for such a book as *Tess*, but, he says, *indulgence in such things has blunted their sensibility to less violent impressions, for, as saith the wise man, Excellens sensibile corrumpit sensum;* but for himself he complained that *Jane Austen* required *pepper, salt and mustard*.[10]

[1] *Rabelais*. Bohn Ed. i, 113. [2] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca*. ii, 37. [3] M. A. C., in *Book-Lore*. v, 59. [4] *Art of Cookery*. 2. [5] *The Enemies of Books*. 113. [6] *George Wyndham: Recognita*. 44. [7] Intro. to *Essays of George Wyndham*. viii. [8] Landor, 'Sent with Poems'. *Works*. (1876.) viii, 113. [9] *Henry Jackson, O.M. A Memoir*. Parry. 179. [10] *Ib*. 172.

Books never pall on him, relates Petrarch in his *Epistolae de Rebus Familiaribus*,[1] their piquant familiarity is their own stimulant, *not only does each book inspire the sense that it belongs to its readers, but it also suggests the names of others, and one begets the desire of the other.* Thus also Roger Ascham: *my book hath been so much my pleasure, and bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more, that in respect of it, all other pleasure, in very deed, be but trifles and troubles unto me.*[2] They are supported by Colley Cibber: he had just read one of the volumes of *Pamela*, and asked for more (in a letter to Samuel Richardson, the author of it, 6.vi.1753): *The delicious meal I made of Miss Byron on Sunday last, has given me an appetite for another slice of her, off from the spit, before she is served up to the public table.* Alcott goes farther, arguing that the test of a ripe book is that its *flavour is as refreshing at the thousandth tasting as at the first*,[3] which Henry Bradshaw supported in his admission to a friend that *he devoured* Kingsley's *Saints' Tragedy*, during all his *undergraduate Mays with fresh pleasure each time*,[4] and he read Wordsworth's *Excursion over and over again*, finding it *wholesome food*.[5] Find more examples of this kind where I record the exploits of great readers. The conclusion is books are a condiment in themselves, and, unlike other foods, even when excessively consumed, need none of *those additional Sauces, which Physitians of old found out to restore the deprav'd Appetites of such great men as had lost their Stomachs by an excess of luxury*.[6]

V. OF CUISINE

Some will have that books are *fruit*—Alcuin *filled* his students with *the fruits of grammatical lore*[7]—or, as Coleridge,[8] *fruit trees* to which *we may recur year after year* to find a supply of *the same nourishment* so long as we return with *the same healthful appetite*. And well they may, for the mouth of the bibliophile *waters* at the sight of them, even of a *catalogue*. The catalogue of the sale of his kinsman Sir Robert Gordon's library made

[1] Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 9. [2] *Works*, Giles. v, 3. [3] *Concord Days*, 'Books'. [4] Prothero, *Memoir of Bradshaw*. 42. [5] *Ib.* 51. [6] King, *Art of Cookery*. 141. [7] Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages*. 122. [8] *Literary Remains*.

Francis Jenkinson's *mouth water*.[1] King James I visited Bodley's Library in 1605; he looked at the well-stocked cases, and said that although he had proofs of the fruits of ability of the University, he had never before seen the garden where those fruits were gathered.[2] It was such a garden that our good Alcuin would have cultivated at Tours, where, being short of *books of Scholastic learning*, he intreated Charlemagne to send into England for some of the books which were so much desired, and thus *to transplant into France the flowers of Britain, that they may fructify and perfume, not only the garden at York, but also the Paradise of Tours*, so that they may say in the words of the song: *Let my beloved come into his garden and eat his pleasant fruit*.[3] Galileo compared the *Orlando Furioso* to a *melon field*, good in it *but not all good*.[4] Books were fruit also to Dibdin, for when visiting the Library at Lambeth Palace he told himself that he could gladly linger in such a *book-domain* through the four seasons of the year, *and gather fruit at every quarter;*[5] and when at Oxford, Dibdin found *Henry's history the sort of 'Hortus Adonidis'* from which he *strove to gather ripe and unperishing fruit;*[6] and he refers to his own *Bibliographical Tour in France and Germany* as *an apple, juicy and well-flavoured*.[7] This recalls a Frenchman[8] who was asked if he preferred his books in *folio*.[9] '*No*,' he replied, '*I like them in fructu*.'[10] A taste widespread and shared by Mark Rutherford, who delighted in Cobbett's *Rural Rides* because he found it *so juicy;*[11] books nourish by their excellence, fruitiness, etc., and those who are under-fed on books are no better than the beasts that perish: *Sir, he hath never fed on the dainties that are bred in a book; he hath not eat paper, as it were; he hath not drunk ink; his intellect is not replenished; he is only an animal, only sensible in the duller parts*.[12] The miracle of books is a miracle of nourishment:

> He ate and drank the precious words,
> His spirit grew robust;[13]

[1] *Francis Jenkinson*, Stewart. 22. [2] Macray, *Annals*. 31. [3] Merryweather, *op. cit.* 122. [4] Spence's *Anecdotes*. (1858.) 76. [5] *Bibliophobia*. 55–6. [6] *Reminiscences*. i, 90. [7] *Ib*. ii, 662. [8] *Walpoliana*. (1800.) 162. [9] 'In the leaf.' [10] 'In the fruit.' [11] *Letters to Three Friends*. 38. [12] *Love's Labour's Lost*. iv, 2, 24. [13] Emily Dickinson, *Life: A Book*.

it is not the quantity but the quality, and the head is not unlike the belly in this respect, for if the belly listens to no precepts, but demands and calls aloud, it is not, as Seneca discovered, and most authorities of to-day would agree, *a troublesome creditor*, demanding but a small amount *provided you give it what you ought, not what you can*,[1] so the head may be satisfied with a little so long as it be good.

In that renowned scriptorium of the Abbey of St. Martin at Tours, Alcuin said that he dealt out *the honey of the Scriptures* to some, others he excited with *the ancient wine of Wisdom*, and still others he filled with *the fruits of grammatical learning*.[2] And Richard de Bury recounts[3] how, in his search for books abroad, he entered the places where the mendicants had their convents, and found in their *fardels and baskets not only crumbs falling from the master's table for the dogs, but the shew-bread without leaven and the bread of angels having in it all that is delicious:* the *garners of Joseph full of corn*, as well as *all the spoil of the Egyptians*, and *the very precious gifts which the Queen of Sheba brought to Solomon. The Psalmes are the Manna of the Church*, says Donne,[4] like *Angels' food* contenting *every man's delight, and agreeing to every man's taste*,[5] but for Eugénie de Guérin *good books are the manna of the people of God, the celestial food of souls on their journey to Heaven*.[6]

James Granger, the biblioclast, *eagerly devoured* Walpole's *Anecdotes on Painting*, and hoped *by reading them over a second time to* digest them.[7] Thomas Gray told West (in a letter, 27.vi.1742) that his life was like Henry the Fourth's supper of Hens—*Poulets à la broche, poulets en ragôut, poulets en hâchis, poulets en fricassées . . . nothing but books with different sauces;* Lord Byron *supped full of horror in two cantos of darkness and dismay;*[8] Macchiavelli bragged that when he passed into his study he fed upon the food which was his own, and for which he was born;[9] Glycion tells Eusebius,[10] *After meat, I have*

[1] *Epist.* 21. [2] Elton, *Great Book-Collectors*. 24. [3] *Philobiblon*. viii. [4] *Sermons*, 'Selected Passages', L. P. Smith. 23. [5] *Wisdom of Solomon*. xvi, 20. [6] *Letters*. 141. [7] *Letters*. Ed. Malcolm. 5–6. [8] Letter to Samuel Rogers. 27.vi.1814. [9] Opere di Macchiavelli. (1813.) vol. viii. Qt. *Book Lover's Ench*. 18. [10] Erasmus, 'Old Men's Dialogue', *Colloquies*.

a collation of learned stories; Lord Keeper North, said Dibdin,[1] *used to make his meals upon some one entertaining Law-volume or another; breakfast upon 'Stamford', dine upon 'Coke', and sup upon 'Fitzherbert'*, and so insatiable was his appetite that, unsatisfied with this *lean* fare, he would *regale himself with a well served-up course of the Arts, Sciences, and the Belles-Lettres!*

Walter Bagehot in his early years found Keats and Shelley *delicious*, and Wordsworth and John Henry Newman were his *daily food;*[2] John Burroughs *lived* for a year on Johnson's *Rambler* and *Idler*, and for a whole summer he *fed upon* Emerson's *Essays;*[3] George Moore *for months fed on the mad and morbid literature that the enthusiasm of* 1830 *called into existence;*[4] Coventry Patmore was helped to survive a course of theological reading which occupied *four hours a day for five months* by an occasional *peg into the roast beef of Shakespeare;*[5] William Cory when at Eton *dined on a grilled fowl, talking foreign policy with Northcote expeditiously*, and *read a very amusing part of the 'Odyssey' by way of pudding;*[6] Lafcadio Hearn enjoyed *Kipling*, who was *like Paul Bourget boiled into thin soup.*[7] Hester Piozzi said she was always ready *for a bit of Old Stilton, as Dr. Johnson called profane History.*[8] Nor was she alone in finding books a substitute for cheese, for Edward FitzGerald once confessed to Frederick Tennyson[9] that he was about *to take down a Thucydides, to feed on: like a whole Parmesan;* and Robert Louis Stevenson calls *Herman Melville a howling cheese.*[10]

Behold *the heir apparent of a Ducal Coronet,*[11] *sedulously sitting down to master volumes*, exclaims Dibdin:[12] *His morning tiffin is alternately Aelian and Thomas Magister: his pétit souper Porphyrius and Terentianus Maurus; while Sidonius Apollinaris, Manilius, and Mercurius Trismegistus he has in sundry little pocket editions, wherewith he delights himself as he wanders along the buttercupped meadows.* John Donne was a devout member

[1] *Bibliomania.* (1811.) 407–8. [2] *Life*, Barrington. *Works.* x, 8. [3] *Indoor Studies.* Riverside Ed. *Works.* viii, 245–7. [4] *Confessions of a Young Man.* (1904.) 72. [5] *Memoirs*, Champneys. i, 252. [6] *Letters and Journals.* 114. [7] *Life and Letters.* Bisland. ii, 84. [8] *Intimate Letters.* 220. [9] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 84. [10] *Letters.* ii, 115. [11] That of the Duke of Devonshire. [12] *Bibliophobia.* 95–6.

of the bibliophagi: dining off the *Scriptures* with gusto, he liked the *Psalms of David* for a first course and the *Epistles of St. Paul* for a second, and he was supported in this *diet* by St. Augustine's protestation that he loved those books for the particular reason that they were *Scriptures*, written in such forms as he had been most accustomed to: *Saint Paul's being Letters, and David's Poems; for God gives us, not only that which is merely necessary, but that which is convenient too; He does not only feed us, but feeds us with marrow and with fatness.*[1]

Queen Elizabeth was also a gastronome of *Holy Writ*, as she records in a copy of Thomson's version of the *New Testament* (now in the Bodleian Library),[2] which she bound in a covering of her own make: *I walke manie times* (her words are on the fly-leaf of the volume) *into the pleasant fieldes of the Holye Scriptures, where I pluck up in the goodlie greene herbes of sentences by pruning, eate them by reading, chewe them up musing, and laie them up at length in the hie seate of memorie by gathering them together; that so having tasted thy sweeteness I may the lesse perceive the bitterness of this miserable life.*

VI. DISHES AND TASTES PARTICULARISED

We all know that the human body can be nourished on a great variety of foods, but how great that variety is we do not always realize. Aulus Gellius[3] tells of a dainty people in *farthest India* with bodies covered with feathers, *spiritu florum naribus hausto victitantem*, who live by inhaling the perfume of flowers; and, in the other extreme, a trustworthy observer[4] gives out that a native of Earl Soham in Suffolk *loved to catch* young frogs and *let them leap down his throat, when he would stroke his stomach*, observing that they were *Beautifully cool!* Well may Thoreau reckon that *there is not one kind of food for all men;*[5] for his own part he was not *unusually squeamish*, and could, if

[1] *Donne's Sermons*, L. P. Smith. 21–2. [2] Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian*. 65. [3] *Noct. Att.* ix, 4. [4] Groome, *Two Suffolk Friends*. 16. [5] *Letters*. 2.vi.1848.

put to it, *eat a fried rat with a good relish.*[1] Human beings are the most omnivorous of all creatures. They can eat anything, even each other, and find nourishment in all manner of unpalatable stuff, even though, as Emerson[2] argues, it were *boiled grass and the broth of shoes.*

In Greenland they eat half-putrid whale and seal, and in England game birds and venison in the same state; the Laplanders relish bear and reindeer, and the Esquimaux and Samoiedes walrus, beaver, otter and fox, as well as decaying fish; the Calmuc Tartars eat horse and ass, preferably putrid, whilst fresh horse-flesh is a regular food in Germany, France and Italy; the Chinese, bad eggs, salted earthworms, smoked fish, sharks' fins, birds' nests, maggots, caterpillars, cats, dogs and rats; in Pegu, Aracan and Siam serpents and mice are delicacies, and the natives of the Ladrone Islands subsist on roots, fruit and fish; Hindoos are vegetarian; Persians enjoy wild ass flesh, and in olden times they ate camels and ostriches; the aborigines of Australia feed upon kangaroos, rats, opossums, bandicoots and rabbits, and they have an inborn taste for various insects and reptiles; reptile eating is still practised in Europe, where the French eat frogs and the English assess turtle a delicacy; Hottentots eat putrid buffalo, caterpillars, ants, grasshoppers and snakes; Western Europeans eat shrimps and crabs; Melanesians eat lice; Kaffirs enjoy lion flesh when they can get it, as well as elephant; Moors and Gipsies like hedgehog; the French and the English enjoy snails, the former preferring the land and the latter the sea varieties such as whelks and periwinkles; Red Indians eat rattlesnakes; crocodiles and iguanas are eaten in South America and the West Indies; the sloth is a dainty in Peru, and the tapir and armadillo in Brazil; centipedes are a delicacy in Central America, and shrimps, prawns, crayfish and lobsters in North America and most European countries; the Ottameques of the Orinoco, the Indians of the Mackenzie, the Peruvians and the Javanese, eat various kinds of earth and clay, a custom not unknown to Europe, for there have been earth eaters in Germany, Sweden, Russia, and Turkey, and in Germany the wood of various

[1] *Walden.* Scott Lib. 216. [2] *The American Scholar.*

trees has been converted into a *nutritious substance*, and the *barke-brod* of the Norwegians is made from the bark of trees.[1]

The manner of eating these various foods is as varied as the foods themselves. The flesh is eaten either raw, cooked, dried, salted or pickled; it is boiled to a pulp or burnt to a cinder; roasted, fried, baked, grilled or stewed; but in some instances the food is relished only when it is alive. The insect-eaters of the South Seas and the oyster-eaters of Western Civilizations have this particularity in common; but this taste reaches its finest expression in Abyssinia, where the cow or bull which is to be the main course of the feast is led to the table and carved alive in the presence of the diners;[2] in Sumatra, where it was the custom to dine off the bodies of condemned criminals or prisoners of war, the victim was brought alive to the table, and tied to a stake; but although the guests selected and carved each his own slice, which might be eaten raw, it was sometimes grilled and served with a seasoning of chili pepper and salt.[3]

The bibliophagi are no less varied in taste and range of choice, and their cuisine is equally varied. *Much reading is like much eating, wholly useless without digestion;*[4] for that reason *books, like salt fish, should be a good while soaking before being served.*[5] Books are as varied as dishes, infinite in their variety: *Great libraries full well furnished, like so many dishes of meat, served out for several palates;*[6] *some to be tasted,* Lord Bacon argues, *others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested,*[7] for according to Hierome, *as mastication is to meat, so is meditation to that which is read;* some, again, declares Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes,[8] must be read *tasting,* every word of them turned on the palate, especially such as *Tennyson, Milton, Gray,* for they themselves tasted every word in the making of their books, *as Ude or Careme would taste a potage meant for a king or a queen.*

[1] Most of these facts are taken from *Illustrations of Eating* (1847), where many of the sources are cited. [2] Bruce, *Abysinnia.* [3] *Illustrations of Eating.* 41–2. [4] Robert South, *Sermons.* Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 97. [5] Anon. Qt. *In Praise of Books.* Swan. 4. [6] Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 102. [7] 'Of Studies', *Essays.* [8] *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.*

Some are like great joints to cut at and come again; for *meat*, Hilaire Belloc knows no equal to *Gibbon*, and he sets the *Decline and Fall* above all literary dishes for permanent delight;[1] others are dainties, entrées, side-dishes, to support the main course; notable among these are the writings of Horace Walpole, which, in the opinion of Macaulay, *rank as high among the delicacies of intellectual epicures as the Strasbourg pies among the dishes described in the 'Almanach des Gourmands'*.[2] Some again are no better than slops, as *Robert Buchanan*, who is *Scotch gruel*,[3] or *cold collations*, as that volume of his verses which Austin Dobson inscribed to George Saintsbury:

> Here, with little variation,
> Comes another 'Cold collation'.[4]

There is a great variety of stews, réchauffés, hot-pots, salmagundies, jussels, olios, ragouts, fricassees, gallimaufries, hashes, forced meats, minces, good enough when the ingredients are sound and the cooking exquisite,

> Judgment provides the Meat in Seasons fit,
> Which by the Genius drest, its Sauce is Wit,[5]

but not those mixtures, *books distilled from books*,[6] messes of odd scraps, stale leavings, plate scrapings, crumbs fallen from the rich man's table (which none but Lazarus would eat), done up into a fardel to look fresh and new. Certain *new-fangled books*, according to Hazlitt,[7] resemble *made dishes*, being little else than *hashes* and *rifaccimentos* of what has been *served up entire and in a more natural state at other times*. Such kickshaws are the common productions of those who live mainly upon literary *food;* better for them to take Isaac D'Israeli's advice to Magliabecchi, and *dress some dishes of* their *own invention, or at least some sandwiches to* their *own relish*:[8]

> Not but that books and Poets still were free,
> To use their Pow'r in nice Variety;[9]

[1] 'Gibbon', *New Statesman*. 18.ii. 1928. [2] 'Horace Walpole', *Essays*. (1872.) 267. [3] George Moore, *Confessions of a Young Man*. (1904.) 80. [4] Dobson, *Poetical Works*. 471. [5] King, *Art of Cookery*. 131. [6] Walt Whitman. [7] 'On Reading Old Books', *The Plain Speaker*. ii, 65. [8] *Cur. Lit.* ii, 179. [9] King, *Art of Cookery*. 55.

but to dish up a company of obsolete sentences and stale phrases, for no other purpose than to make a book for profit, is to do no better than to make a stew of table-scraps and leavings and offer them as food in a public eating-house. Macaulay discommends those other *rifaccimenti*, *harmonies*, *abridgements*, *expurgated editions*, commuted for queasy stomachs, but which, he stiffly holds, *no man of taste can endure*.

Cory recognizes one class of books as no better than *confectionery*,[1] and such as these have no more nourishment than those empty luxurious tomes put out by cunning publishers to tempt vain spenders, *their lusciousness puts many palates out of taste, so that they can never after relish any solid or wholesome writers*:[2]

> Luxury gives the mind a childish cast,
> And while she polishes, perverts the taste;[3]

as that, perchance, of Cleopatra, who had whole boars and sheep served up at her table at once, drank jewels dissolved, 40,000 sesterces in value; but to what end?

Other books are *hors d'œuvres*, *smorgosbord*, *aufschnitts*, as anthologies, good for all sound stomachs, or savouries, which by their piquancy and brevity serve as culinary toys. Such *delicatessen* are for the idle moment or the preliminaries of the feast, when light talk, raillery, *brilliance*, badinage, etc., come into the game. They must be taken frugally, as also those delicious *entremets* and *glaces*, *trifles*, light as air, hot or cold, or both (as *soufflé surprise*, *Macédoine de fruits*, etc.). *Novels are sweets*, says Thackeray,[4] *all people with healthy appetites love them;* others there be who prefer

> To suck the sweets of sweet philosophy.[5]

Warton's edition of the minor poems of Milton, according to Leigh Hunt,[6] is *a wilderness of sweets;* and so on to *friandises* and dessert. Dibdin classed Ferriar's *Bibliomania* with the latter;[7] and when he dined with Dr. Butler at Shrewsbury School, after visiting the Library, he notes that there

[1] 'Table Talk', in *Gathered Leaves*, M. E. Coleridge. 303. [2] Fuller, *Holy and Profane State*. [3] Cowper. [4] *Roundabout Papers*. [5] *Taming of the Shrew*. i, 1. [6] 'My Books', *Essays*. Camelot Ed. 300. [7] *Reminiscences*. i, 272.

lurked, in an adjoining cupboard, which they could see *during snatches of savoury viands, and especially during the migrations of the glass,* a *dessert—in the shape of an ancient Greek MS.;*[1] walnuts and wine, salted almonds, the *frills and furbelows* of the repast, dainty, graceful, trivial, good in their place, but, like art in the poet, not to be indulged in *ad libitum:*

> Good to kiss and flirt with
> But marry if you dare![2]

Nor would the *judicious reader* indulge his palate or try his digestion overmuch with those works of the *captious critics* who *cut up their authors into chops, and by adding a little crumbled bread of their own, and tossing it up a little, present it as a fresh dish; you are to dine upon a poet;—the critic supplies the garnish.*[3]

[1] *Ib.* ii, 971. [2] Richard le Gallienne. [3] Hannah More, *Memoirs.*

PART X

OF BOOK-DRINKERS

I. OF THEIR LIQUEFACTION AND PROPENSITIES PROPER TO DRINKING

To this gastronomic catalogue I must add a little, for I have not yet said all. Books are also beverages: *I never drink but in my breviary;*[1] so there is still to account for those numerous instances wherein they have quenched thirst and satisfied our Dionysian needs. When Mr. Grobe turned from Mr. Weston's Good Wine to his bookcase, he saw that *Good wine was there too. Good wine that had never yet failed him. Good wine that had ever given a deep drink of the proper colour and taste to the gentle reader.*[2] Many bookmen sit down to read as though at a banquet or a merry feast: *They taste styles, as some discreeter palates do wine;*[3] *relish that delicious beverage which they have swallowed so thirstily from the magical cup of literature.*[4] Emerson observes as much in his parallel of *the insect world*, for whoever looks at it *must have remarked*, he relates,[5] *the extreme content they take in suction*, and *if we go into a* library, *we see the same function on a higher plane, performed with like ardour, with equal impatience of interruption, indicating the sweetness of the act.* I need not support him with more than two examples: one of Mrs. Hemans, *drinking in high thoughts and glorious images*,[6] and the other of Francis Thompson imbibing *the effluence of particular passages* of Shakespeare.[7]

> I love my books as drinkers love their wine;
> The more I drink, the more they seem divine;
> With joy elate my soul in love runs o'er,
> And each fresh draught is sweeter than before:[8]

[1] *Rabelais.* Bohn Ed. i, 111. [2] T. F. Powys, *Mr. Weston's Good Wine.* 248. [3] Earle, 'A Critic', *Microcosmography.* xlv. [4] D'Israeli, *Curiosities of Literature.* i, 7. [5] 'Quotation and Originality', *Letters and Social Aims.* 129. [6] Chorley, *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.* i, 20. [7] *Life.* Everard Meynell. 11. [8] Francis Bennoch, 'My Books', *The Storm and other Poems.*

and as connoisseurs of wine pride themselves on their palate and their staying power, so the three-bottle bookman likes a man who can carry his bookish liquor; but the amateur of literary vintages prefers one who senses the subtleties of letters, their *bouquet*, fragrance, flavour, etc.; he feels as Erasmus did, *an impatient irritation at the thought and in the presence of those who* have *not drunk of their wisdom and undergone their discipline.*[1]

A nameless pamphleteer of the eighteenth century, in *A Project for the Destruction of Printing and Bookselling*, was so bold as to argue in favour of the liquefaction of books: barrel and bottle them off, he advises, and they will be more acceptable: *a cellar of books would be more invitingly absorbable than a library*. His discoverer[2] imagines *Mr. Birrell at the Athenæum Club, sipping his* 1791 *Boswell, critically appreciative of the vintage edition*, and younger members trifling with the club cocktail, *a piquant mixture of 'Punch' and the 'War Cry', blended from a recipe used in the family of a bishop for very many years.* Oliver Wendell Holmes[3] not only believed that books were capable of liquefaction, but that *society* was no more than *a strong solution of books;* it drew the virtue out of what was best worth reading, as hot water the strength of tea-leaves. *If I were a prince*, he adds, *I would hire or buy a private literary teapot, in which I would steep all the leaves of new books that promised well, that the infusion* would suffice *without the vegetable fibre*. He was supported, in anticipation, by Douce, the antiquarian, who gives out, in a letter to Dibdin,[4] that *bohea of a better quality than imperial souchong* may be *sipped* from *pricksongs, poetry, and anthems*. The lesser sort of books which circumstances compelled Beloe to *drink* for the purposes of his anecdotes were *smaller, though not less pellucid and refreshing streams.*[5] Edward FitzGerald[6] held that there was an *infusion* of *Xenophon* in *Sophocles*, as compared with *Aeschylus*, who was a *dilution;* and Addison gives as a recipe for an essay writer

[1] Lionel Johnson, *Post Liminium*. 164–5. [2] W. G. Clifford, *Books in Bottles*. 15. [3] *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. (1902.) 57. [4] *Reminiscences*. ii, 889. [5] Beloe, *Anecdotes*. ii, 372. [6] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 190.

that he *must practise in the chemical method and give the virtue of a full draught in a few drops*,[1] a method evidently adopted by Ben Jonson, who, John Addington Symonds[2] says, *held the prose writers and poets of antiquity in solution in his capacious memory;* and, a young writer of the 'nineties, has a friend who was *suckled from Dante, and weaned on Goethe*.[3]

Apuleius, in his *Florida*,[4] recalls the wise man's saying regarding the libations of the table: *the first cup for thirst, the second for mirth, the third for delight, the fourth for madness*, and finds no such *descensus* in the *Goblet of the Muses*, which the more unmixed it is and the oftener it is drained, *the more it conduces to soundness of mind*. The first cup takes away ignorance, the second instructs in science, and the third arms with eloquence. *Thus far*, saith he, *most people drink. But I have drunk other cups at Athens; the cup of Poetry, the inventive; of Geometry, the limpid; of Music, the sweet; of Dialectics, the roughish; and of Universal Philosophy, the never-satiating, nectarious cup. For Empedocles gives us verses; Plato, dialogues; Socrates, hymns; Epicharmus, modulations; Xenophon, histories; Xenocrates, satires: your Apuleius*, he concludeth, *all these together*, for he has *cultivated the Nine Muses with equal assiduity* if with *more good will than capacity*.[5] Well may Joubert discover that *when once the mind has tasted the sap of words, it can no more do without it*, for *it drinks thought there*.[6]

II. THEY RAISE AND QUENCH THIRST AND ARE POTENT BEVERAGES

I thirst for Mr. Burke's Reflections on the Revolution in France, says Gibbon, and he asks Cadell to *intreat Elmsley to dispatch it to Lausanne with care and speed, by any mode of conveyance less expensive than the post;*[7] Dibdin was *violently seized* with *the thirst for black letter literature*, which was somewhat quenched with a copy of More's *Utopia* of 1551;[8] Hazlitt *drank of the*

[1] *Spectator*. 124. [2] *Ben Jonson*. [3] Malcolm Macmillan. *Letters*. 34. [4] Bohn. xx, 402. [5] *App*. Bohn. xx, 402. [6] *Selected Thoughts*. Trans. Lyttleton. 147. [7] In a letter, 17.xi.1790. [8] *Reminiscences*. i, 267.

stream of knowledge and *eagerly slaked* his *thirst of German sentiment* with Goethe's *Sorrows of Werther* and Schiller's *Robbers;*[1] it was late in life that Cicero became acquainted with Greek literature, absorbing it with avidity as though *yearning to quench a long-continued thirst.*[2] But many authorities agree that in any condition approaching bibliomania, this thirst is not so easily stayed, 'tis, in short, an *unquenchable thirst for possession.*[3] So *insatiable is the thirst of men*[4] for books, that they take delight in a vinous denomination for their favourites, as Pasquin, in his *Palinodia*, called a piece *A Pleasant Pint of Poetical Sherry*. Leigh Hunt[5] cried out for a *Literaria Hilaris Gaudens* in a score of volumes, to have at hand, like a *cellar of good wine*, against dull and rainy days: Fielding should be *port*, Farquhar, *champagne*, Sterne, *malmsey;* whenever the possessor cast eye upon such a collection he would know that he had *a choice draught for himself after a disappointment, or for a friend after dinner,—some cordial extract of Parson Adams, or Plume, or Uncle Toby, generous as heart could desire, and as wholesome for it as laughter for the lungs.* Sir Henry Savile, in the *Dedication*[6] of his *Tacitus* to Queen Elizabeth, likens that history to *wine* and his translation to the *lees*, but since her Highness had held the former in most worthy account she would not disdain the latter, for he hoped that it might peradventure pleasure her *though by change from vessell to vessell having taken winde and lost his pleasing taste to the palate, yet retaining somewhat of his former strength.* So a library is a cellar stored with wines, spirits, and other rich beverages.

Dr. John Brown looked upon Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey* as *a new liquor, fresh and aromatic;*[7] the poems of Catulle Mendés were sweet as *a smooth perfumed yellow wine* to George Moore;[8] Edward FitzGerald lamented[9] that the songs which Tennyson *stuck between the cantos of the 'Princess'* had none of *the old champagne flavour* of his earlier songs, and

[1] *Plain Speaker.* ii, 75. [2] *On Old Age.* Trans. Shuckburgh. 50. [3] R. M. Field. Intro. *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* Eugene Field. vii. [4] Fuller, *The Holy State and the Profane State.* [5] 'Cheerful Poets.' [6] *The End of Nero, etc.* [Tacitus.] (1591.) [7] *Letters.* 338. [8] *Confessions of a Young Man.* (1904.) 79. [9] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 200.

that *Gil Blas* was *too thin a wine* for him, *all sparkling with little adventures, but no one to care about;*[1] Froude always carried a collection of *pocket classics* on a journey, for *Greek and Latin literature is wine which does not spoil by time;*[2] Coventry Patmore found reading theology like *living on brandy and soda-water,*[3] and he liked to *consume the spirit* of his favourite books *diluted* with his *own thoughts, not with those of other people;*[4] for Joubert, *Voltaire was clear like water, Bossuet clear like wine;*[5] Edmund Gosse records that to put *Tom Cringle's Log* into the hands of a youth is like *giving a glass of brandy neat to some one who had never been weaned from a milk diet.*[6] Tom Hood was *little grieved* when reduced through ill-health to the *drink that drowns kittens,* because he could still quaff such rare liquors as the *champagne* of *Molière,* the *Monte Pulciano* of *Boccaccio,* the *hock* of *Schiller,* and the *sherry* of *Cervantes;* depressed bodily by *the fluid that damps everything,* he got *intellectually elevated* with *Milton,* a *little merry* with *Swift, rather jolly* with *Rabelais,* whose *Pantagruel* he found *equal to the best gruel with rum in it;*[7] and Robert Lang, the *Meliadus* of Dibdin's *Decameron,* though devoted to a fine table, *his beautiful house and beautiful book-cases* having *witnessed many a scene of delightful conviviality,* placed *Verard* above *Johannisberg,* and *Micel Le Noir* beyond *Champagne.*[8]

Some reliable witnesses will have that books are cordials:

> Who let me taste that more than cordial dram,
> The sharp, the rapier-pointed epigram.[9]

T. Edwards told Samuel Richardson[10] that as people kept their cordials for the winter, so, too, he now fled to his, which were *Pamela* and *Clarissa;* and what more characteristic of the power of potent liquor than Emerson's[11] testimony to that *miraculous force* which proceedeth from them, when after we have gone forth musing into a night of gloom where *no*

[1] *Ib.* i, 370. [2] Froude, *Oceana.* 24. [3] *Memoirs.* Champneys. i, 252. [4] *Ib.* ii, 106. [5] *Selected Thoughts.* Trans. Lyttleton. 185. [6] *Father and Son.* Pop. Ed. 210. [7] Letter to the Manchester Athenæum. 1843. [8] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* i, 372–3. [9] Keats, 'Epistle to Charles Cowden Clarke', *Letters.* Ed. Forman. (1895.) 64–5. [10] Barbauld, Letter. 19. xii. 1737. [11] *Thoughts on Modern Literature.*

constellation shines, no muse descends, the stars are white points, the roses brick-coloured dust, the frogs pipe, mice peep, and wagons creak along the road, we return and take up *Plutarch* or *Augustine,* and lo! *the air swims with life; the front of heaven is filled with fiery shapes; secrets of magnanimity and grandeur invite us on every hand.* No other cordial has such power to restore the depressed soul of man; books are ever ready, it is always *tempus aptum* with them, always opportune, they are ever willing, and when other potions flag and fail it is they that uphold us. *I tried to cheer myself by thinking over the joys of our human lot. But there wasn't one of them for which I seemed to care a button—not Wine, nor Fame, nor Friendship, nor Eating, nor Making Love, nor the Consciousness of Virtue;* then he[1] thought of reading, and *the nice and subtle happiness of reading* was enough: *this joy not dulled by Age, this polite and unpunished vice, this selfish, serene, life-long intoxication.* And unlike all other liquors the barrel never runs dry, the bottle is never empty; a good book is always on tap; it may be decanted and drunk a hundred times, and it is still there for further imbibement: *My Aristophanes is nearly drained: that is, for the present first reading: for he will never be dry, apply as often as I may.*[2]

III. BIBLIOBIBACITY WITH A DIGRESSION OF ECSTASY

I may not deny but that there is some folly approved, a divine fury, a holy madness, a spiritual drunkenness, a rich ecstasy, in these book-struck men, familiar to saint or artist, which causeth many times a divine ravishment, a kind of *enthusiasmus,* and is, as all know, the inseparable companion, for however brief a time, of any creative act: *a divine drunkenness is given to them for their encouragement, surpassing the gift of the grape.*[3]

Euripides implies as much in the *Bacchae,* where he relates how Dionysus, *the good God, who bestoweth cheerfulnesse upon*

[1] Logan Pearsall Smith, *Trivia.* 143. [2] Edward FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 39–40. [3] Hamerton, *Intellectual Life.* 45.

men, and youth unto aged men, and who layeth and aswageth the passions of the minde,[1] is born of the ecstasy of Semelê by the mysterious flash of light which was the answer to her prayer that she should be visited by Zeus:

> Behold, God's Son is come into this land
> Of Thebes, even I, Dionysus, whom the brand
> Of heaven's hot splendour lit to life, when she
> Who bore me, Cadmus' daughter Semelê,
> Died here.[2]

Dionysus himself becomes *a God of Intoxication, of Inspiration, a giver of superhuman or immortal life*, and when his religion of ecstasy is displaced by Orphism, the priests of the new religion promise the faithful a hereafter of *eternal ecstasy* or *perpetual intoxication*, as Plato satirically calls it.[3] But whether it is one or the other, or whether there is any difference between drunkenness and ecstasy, once you are in either condition, the authorities (as usual) cannot agree; yet 'tis well known that to be well whittled with nectar was the prerogative and pleasure of the Gods. The wizard drunkenness, which Keats reckons up in his *Ode to the Nightingale*, where he yearns to be ravished into bliss by a tot of such witty liquor as might have been distilled by Bacchus himself, is a descendant of the true Dionysian frenzy:

> O for a draught of vintage, that hath been
> Cool'd a long age in the deep-delvèd earth,
> Tasting of Flora and the country green,
> Dance, and Provençal song, and sunburnt mirth!
> O for a beaker full of the warm South,
> Full of the true, the blushful Hippocrene,
> With beaded bubbles winking at the brim,
> And purple-stainèd mouth;
> That I might drink, and leave the world unseen,
> And with thee fade away into the forest dim.

But although we must not consider these adventures meet for common men, ecstasy in some degree is opportune to all, for we may be wrought up to it in love or war, in a theatre or

[1] Montaigne, 'Of Drunkennesse', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 20.
[2] *Bacchae*. 1–4. Trans. Gilbert Murray. (*Athen. Drama*. iii, 79.)
[3] *Id. Athen. Drama*. iii, Notes 165 *et seq*.

in a church, in a crowd or in solitude, by all manner of circumstances, often trivial. Crowds are subject, as we know, to *frenzy*, and addicted to *collective hallucinations*,[1] which affect those who mingle with them; *solitude affects some people like wine*, says Mary Coleridge, *they must not take too much of it;* for *it flies to the head, and they become intoxicated;*[2] Horace Walpole was *intoxicated by his appointment to act as poet-laureate on the occasion of a visit of the Princess Amelia to Stowe*;[3] and Thoreau will have[4] *there are infinite degrees of drunkenness*, with as many causes and direct promoters; *even*, he says, *music may be intoxicating* (as musicians generally agree), but *of all ebriosity, who*, he asks, *does not prefer to be intoxicated by the air he breathes?* There are many also who hold that there is no better tipple than water, and there was a spring in Paphlagonia and a river near Erigon to which the natives resorted for a tipple,[5] as in later times connoisseurs have taken to the *mountain water*[6] of Swift.

Brillat-Savarin is tempted to couple the search for immortality and the search for strong drink as *the two attributes of man* which distinguish him from the *lower animals*, and he observes how savages have been ever restless in their search for fermented liquors, *they have soured the milk of their domestic animals; they have extracted the juice of different fruits, roots*, etc.,[7] in search of those *intimations of immortality* which Wordsworth found in the heart of a child or in the contemplation of natural objects; for what is ecstasy but a glimpse of eternity? There are no two answers to this question, even from those kill-joys who smell evil in all strong drink, yet one need not emulate the tosspot to discover these ecstasies, as many stout moralists have allowed, yea, even, as Montaigne gives out,[8] *some of the Stoickes deeme it not amisse for man sometimes to take his liquor roundly, and drinke drunke thereby to recreate his spirits.* John Addington Symonds infers[9] the same when he

[1] Gustave le Bon, *The Crowd*. 46. [2] *Gathered Leaves*. 223. [3] Leslie Stephen, *Hours in a Library*. ii, 114. [4] *Walden*. Scott Library. 216. [5] *Athenaeus*. ii, 42. [6] Sir Walter Raleigh, *Letters*. i, 234. [7] *Physiologie du Goût*. Trans. Anderson. 98–9. [8] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 15. [9] *John Addington Symonds: a Biography*. H. F. Brown. 243–4.

winces with world-weariness. What remedy is there for nerve-racked men but the anodyne of intoxication? All other antidotes fail before the anguish of the soul, *the cypress of knowledge springs, and withers when it comes in sight of Troy; the cypress of pleasure likewise if it has not died already at the root of cankering Calvinism; the cypress of religion is tottering, the axe is laid close to its venerable stem;* the only remedies for modern men are the anodyne of art, for artists; science, for the scientific; but music is *the best anodyne of all*, and next to it *Hasheesh, of one sort or another*, especially that which comes from books. *We can dull the pangs of the present by living the past again in reveries or learned studies, by illusions of the fancy and a life of self-indulgent dreaming. Take down the perfumed scrolls*, he advises, *open, unroll, peruse, digest, intoxicate your spirit with the flavour. Behold, there is the Athens of Plato, in your narcotic visions; Buddha and his anchorites appear; the raptures of St. Francis, and the fire-oblations of St. Dominic; the phantasms of mythologies, the birth-throes of religions, the neurotism of chivalry, the passion of past poems; all pass in your Maya-world of hasheesh, which is criticism. Nought*, therefore, *that Bacchus gives should be rejected.*[1] But I digress and roam about, so come we to our theme again.

Words, as I have sufficiently shown, have this potency: we are rapt out of ourselves by them, which is all some readers seek. *The great business of* Dr. Johnson's life *was to escape from himself.*[2] By words *we are shaken and lifted out of our ordinary state of consciousness*, says a reliable authority:[3] they enhance our faculties, give us *keener perceptions; more than our normal stock of penetrative sympathy;* and *another effect of the drug is that, while it is acting strongly, the whole adventure of mankind upon the earth gains, in our sight, a new momentousness, precariousness and beauty.* Of all ancient and modern opinions concerning the liquescency of books I find none more apt than those which refer their disposition in this kind to that ecstasy which is the immemorial prerogative of wine; for, as Wordsworth

[1] *οὐδὲν ἀπόβλητον Διονύσιον, οὐδὲ γίγαρτον.* Simonides. Qt. Athenaeus. i, 32. [2] *Life*. Ed. Hill. i, 145. [3] C. E. Montague, *A Writer's Notes on his Trade*. 246.

held, men are *stirred to ecstasy* by *glittering verse*,[1] and as Longinus was never tired of saying, *every bold experiment in language finds a solvent and a specific in deeds and passions which approach frenzy*.[2] The very words have in them the elements of these passionate experiences,

> Visionary power
> Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
> Embodied in the mystery of words,[3]

as those *gurus* and *yogi* of the East well know, and as Tennyson learnt when he threw himself into an ecstasy by repeating his own name[4] when *consciousness of individuality seemed to dissolve and fade away into boundless being*, which made him kin with the Buddhists who work themselves into a divine rapture by the rhythmical reiteration of the mystic monosyllable *Om* which prefaces the hymns of the *Vedas* and is for them the symbol of God, each letter having a sacred significance.[5]

How much more efficacious in their ebriosity are words when disposed rhetorically, whether as auto-intoxicants or applied inebriators, is well known. Lord Beaconsfield went so far as to charge Mr. Gladstone with being *inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity;*[6] and orators, from the rhetoricians of ancient Greece to the *spell-binders* of modern America —Demosthenes or Billy Sunday, it is all one—practise the same art on their audiences, *they dulcify the voice, modulating, smoothing, intoning* (or, in our times, shouting, stamping and thumping), *till the hearer is carried away with a perfect intoxication*.[7] It is known also that writers have induced this state of ecstasy in order to facilitate their creative work, or to relieve them of the burden of mundane cares, and so release their creative energies. Thus Thomas de Quincey and Coleridge composed masterpieces under the influence of opium, and according to Chamæleon, Aeschylus *wrote his tragedies when drunk*.[8] But whether they are drunk on mortal drink or not,

[1] *Prelude*. v, 590–1. [2] *The Sublime*. Trans. Prickard. 70. [3] Wordsworth, *Prelude*. v, 595–7. [4] Lang, *Tennyson: a Memoir*. i, 320. [5] *Vishnu Parána*. Wilson. 273. n. 4. [6] *Speech in the House of Commons*, 1878. [7] Plutarch, *Select Essays*. Tucker. 165. [8] Athenaeus. i, 22.

makes no difference: they must get out of themselves before they can get into their art. *All good poets compose their beautiful poems not as works of art, but because they are inspired and possessed;* they are no more *in their right mind* when they compose than the *Corybantian revellers when they dance.*[1] Many authorities in all times have said as much, but I shall cite no other opinion than that of Macaulay, who deems, out of *Shakespeare*, that frenzy, amounting to *a partial derangement of the intellect*, is essential to poetry.[2]

Some even fly to books to escape the temptation of more potent fluids, as a Scottish philosopher, who *instead of having recourse to those gross stimulants*, by which *worn* men of both high and low degree are tempted, took down his *Sophocles*, or his *Plato*, his *Goethe*, *Dante*, *Shakespeare*, *Shelley*, *Wordsworth*, or *Tennyson*, and found the jars and discords of nerves cease and *physical exhaustion rise by degrees into consciousness of power.*[3] There are some authorities, I know, who would set liquor above literature as an inebriant,

> Oh many a peer of England brews
> Livelier liquor than the Muse,
> And malt does more than Milton can
> To justify God's ways to man;[4]

at the same time, my poet is brave enough to admit that the pleasures produced by malt are ephemeral; and they are wise, therefore, who like nothing better than to get drunk on books,

> Not charioted by Bacchus and his pards,
> But on the viewless wings of Poesy;[5]

the *reading of poetry* being, as some hold, no more than *self-intoxication*, and *artfully-ordered words*, *substitutes for the wine-flask.*[6] *Ne'er a line of* Aretino but is *able to make a man drunken with admiration.*[7] Some, I find, go even farther, giving out that it is not only possible to get drunk on poetry and on the

[1] Plato, *Ion*. Jowett. i, 247–8. [2] 'Milton', *Essays*. (1872.) 4. [3] T. W. Robertson, *Lectures and Addresses*. [4] A. E. Housman, *A Shropshire Lad*. lxii. [5] Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale'. [6] Hamerton, *Intellectual Life*. 44. [7] Thomas Nash, Qt. *Book of English Prose*. Ed. Henley and Whibley. 198.

idle fumes and intoxicating fancies of the bawdy play-books and romances, reviled by Baxter,[1] but on the *Holy Scriptures*, as those good brothers in the monastic house of St. Martin, whom Alcuin *inebriated* with the *study of ancient wisdom*.[2]

That books have a like effect upon many of the more sensitive of their devotees is well known, in spite of Charpentier's scepticism when Heinsius announced that *Plato operated upon him like the intoxication produced by swallowing ten bumpers of wine*.[3] Dibdin has several instances. He himself, accidentally becoming the possessor, when a youth, of an odd volume of *Shakespeare*, was *excited almost to delirium*,[4] whilst the *Iliad* took *entire possession of the very strongholds of imagination and reason*.[5] Isaac D'Israeli confesses that Dibdin's *Bibliomania* had *infected* him *with the most exquisite inebriation*.[6] and some time after he tells its author that he is *not yet recovered from the delightful delirium*.[7] When the *Bibliographical Decameron* was published it *nearly turned the head* of Alexander Chalmers;[8] and Dibdin believes[9] that if ever he visited the Advocates' Library at Edinburgh, he might need *David Laing, Esq., the erudite and able secretary*, to *help him up in case* he fell, *or was taken with too long a swooning fit of delirious rapture*.

When we come to times present I find the same news. Anatole France records that men get *drunk with reading;* but Joubert will have that *the best literary work does not intoxicate—it enchants*,[10] which is not supported by the evidence I have collected from either past or present times. Thoreau gives out[11] that Mir Camar Uddin Mast experienced the pleasure of intoxication after he had *drunk the liquor of the esoteric doctrines;* Frederick Myers was intoxicated by *Sappho;*[12] Meredith's *Love in the Valley* makes Stevenson *drunk like wine;*[13] Hamerton has seen *a young poet intoxicated with the love of poetry;*[14] Edmund Gosse when a youth was *thrown into a temporary frenzy by the*

[1] *Christian Directory*. i, 16. [2] Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages*. 122. [3] Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench*. 82. [4] Dibdin, *Reminiscences*. i, 64–5. [5] *Ib*. 73. [6] *Ib*. 307. [7] *Ib*. 306. [8] *Ib*. ii, 650. [9] *Ib*. i, 473. [10] *Selected Thoughts*. Trans. Lyttleton. 174. [11] *Walden*. Scott Lib. 97–8. [12] Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*. 18. [13] *Letters*. ii, 324. [14] *Intellectual Life*. 44.

epic poetry of Scott;[1] *Mdlle. de Maupin* made George Moore see *with delightful clearness and with intoxicating conviction, that by looking without shame and accepting with love the flesh,* he might *raise it to as high a place within as divine a light as even the soul had been set in;*[2] when C. E. Montague was a boy these lines out of *Scott,*

> Yet the lark's shrill fife may come
> At the day-break from the fallow,
> And the bittern sound his drum,
> Booming from the sedgy shallow,

made him *so drunk with delight* that he *had to walk up and down empty compartments of trains, saying them over and over again, as incapable as a bluebottle either of sitting quiet or ceasing to hum;*[3] and Proust notes those *intellectuals worshipping art with a big A, who, when they can no longer intoxicate themselves upon Zola, inject themselves with Verlaine, and become etheromaniacs out of Baudelairian devotion.*[4]

Henry Jackson escapes the *intoxicating* effects of Swinburne's *Atalanta* because, *unluckily,* he admitted, *I don't like getting drunk.*[5] Even when reading is impossible, the presence of books acquired by passionate devotion to them produces such an ecstasy that *the buying of more books than one can peradventure read* is nothing less than the soul *reaching towards infinity,* and that this passion is *the only thing that raises us above the beasts that perish,*[6] an argument which some have used in defence of the giddy raptures invoked by wine.

I cannot deny that something may be said in defence of raptures by which a bookman may become no less than one of *Homer's gods drunk with Nectar and Nepenthe;*[7] so that it be discreetly and moderately done, it shall not be amiss to anyone, least of all himself; and if, as some will contend, he abide in a fool's paradise, he has an advantage in his folly unknown to those who are always sensible, and I could here tax many

[1] *Father and Son.* (1909.) 239. [2] *Confessions of a Young Man.* (1909.) 67. [3] *A Writer's Notes on his Trade.* 244. [4] *Cities of the Plain.* Trans. Scott Moncrieff. ii, 141. [5] *Henry Jackson, O.M. A Memoir.* Parry. 239. [6] A. E. Newton, *A Magnificent Farce.* 78. [7] Erasmus, *Moriae Encomium.* Trans. Wilson. 7.

virtues, proprieties, moralities, respectabilities amongst us which are less kind and more properly to be condemned for the inconvenience they give and the pain they cause for the sake of principle, or the glory of God; there are many such, *quae nunc in aurem susurrare non libet.*[1] But I must take heed, *ne quid gravius dicam*, that I do not overshoot myself. I am forth of my element, as you peradventure observe.

[1] 'Which would give offence now even to whisper in the ear.'

PART XI

A PAGEANT OF BOOKMEN

I. BOOKFOLK DEFINED

In other sections mention is made, among many comfortable objects, of the usefulness, purpose, and pleasures which proceed from books. I shall now set out divers common experiences of bookmen of different times and several lands, which will inform how universal, profound and varied is the love of reading, so as to inculcate the final lesson of all my researches into this branch of the subject, namely: that the best books for you are the books you like best, and that in any catalogue of bookish preferences tastes cancel out. Books are like people, few suit all palates, all arouse dislike in some; and the best books, those that have survived the test of time and the slings and arrows of critics and lovers, remain closed to most people, bookfolk being a distinct, though scattered class, if not even more specifically to be differentiated, as I shall later discuss. Here again, however, let me observe that I find no fault with the crowds of men and women who read no books, or only *biblia a-biblia;* it is their nature, and they do very well in their several kinds and methods of life. Reading is a matter of taste, not morality.

Besides the reverence we owe to the wisest and most profound books, there are several considerable arguments I could allege to render it exceeding probable that the meaning of great books is dimmed or distorted by crowds, and in this respect it is better that books and crowds should remain apart; and, since crowds are powerful, it may be wise for us to bear with them *in their amusements, that they, in return, may shew indulgence to ours,*[1] for all the true bookman asks is to be left

[1] 'Demus alienis oblectationibus veniam, ut nostris impetremus.' Pliny, *Letters.* Melmoth. Loeb Ed. ix, 17.

alone with the books of his own choosing, to escape alike the interference of moral meddlers and the noises raised by the propagandists and distributors of ready-made culture.[1] For the rest, those who are bookfolk, and they come from all classes, just as the vulgar herd is not confined to poor and untutored people, that which one omits another may haply see, that which one condemns another may uphold. There are chances for all, and the choice is yet free for those who care to exercise their own predilections.

There are some, even, and among them notable connoisseurs of books, whose curiosity is so intense that all print proves irresistible to them. J. C. Squire confesses that he is *one of those who can never help reading any odd piece of printed paper which comes into their hands accidentally. For instance*, he mentions, *odd sheets which shroud parcels sent by booksellers or publishers; fragments found amid the seaweed, straw, wood, bottles and corks on a beach; and pieces impaled by my stick when out walking.*[2] I note these differences and vagaries in passing, to clear the air, so that henceforward it should not be hard to describe what are the proper indications of a good reader. I shall now, therefore, get down to the facts and so make more familiar and easy his tastes, whims, eccentricities, for every one's capacity, which is a chief end of my discourse.

This part, then, is a fardel of general bookish experiences, chiefly *adventures among masterpieces*,[3] with many peculiar instances and examples, to be considered as preparatory to the understanding of this great faculty, which has been of such value to so many otherwise diverse men, and will still mean much, perchance more, in the years to come, for in the mechanisation and mass-rule which are upon us, books may well be our last line of defence, and reading our *loophole of retreat*.[4] But I hasten to my instances.

[1] 'Art is upon the Town!—to be chucked under the chin by the passing gallant—to be enticed within the gates of the householder—to be coaxed into company, as a proof of culture and refinement.' Whistler, *Ten o'clock*. (1888.) 7. [2] *Life at the Mermaid*. 101. [3] Anatole France, *Life and Letters*. Preface. First Series. vii. [4] Cowper.

II. MONTAIGNE AND PETRARCH AS TYPES OF GOOD BOOKMEN

No better examples of good bookmen can be found or put up than those of Montaigne and Petrarch, and I set their names here as typical of all great readers, worthy to be masters and leaders in our adventuring. Montaigne swings eloquently to my purpose as a true indication of sanely varied and self-centred book-taste. He was (it appears by his own words) both a good and a bad reader according to those authorities who would ever be sorting us out into moral equations, which most times is no more than attempting to make two straight lines enclose a space or parallel lines meet. He read for pleasure, and found profit in doing so, as all do whose inclinations are healthy. He was not much addicted to Greek books, but set a high value upon *Plutarch* and *Seneca; both*, he says, *having this excellent commodity for my humour, that the knowledge I seeke in them is there so scatteringly and loosely handled, that whosoever readeth them is not tied to plod along upon them, whereof I am incapable*. He was not a regular, laborious reader, but loved, like our own Dr. Johnson, to sip here and sample there; to roam and browse and chew the cud. He frankly admits a preference even for desultory and idle reading, which so many are apt to condemn, but which has its place, to my thinking.

He sets uppermost in his picked hierarchy the poets, *Virgil*, *Lucretius*, *Catullus* and *Horace*, especially Virgil in the *Georgics;* and among the modern books *merely pleasant*, he esteemed Boccaccio his *Decameron*, *Rabelais*, and the *Kisses* of John the Second; but Cicero's *manner of writing* was very tedious to him, as all *such-like stuffe*, for *his prefaces, definitions, divisions, and Etymologies, consume the greatest part of his Works, and whatsoever quick, wittie, and pithie conceit is in him, is surcharged, and confounded by those his long and far-fetcht preambles;* as for *Amadis* and *such like trash of writings*, they had never the credit so much as to allure his youth to delight in them. But I have no complaint, his tastes were his own, and his whims were tastes, revealing him to himself and to us; for more, read his

essay *Of Bookes*, where he discourseth at large on these matters; and compare if you will Petrarch, a great reader of another kind, who as the herald of the Renaissance of Ancient Literature, made the Greek and Latin Classics his close friends, *Virgil*, *Ovid*, *Seneca*, *Aristotle* and *Valerius Maximus* closest of all, despising for the most part the works of the Fathers, whose dominance he helped to end.

Into the midst of this galaxy of Pagan stars he brought St. Augustine's *Confessions*, *bubbling over with tears*, which he read *continuously for forty years;*[1] he loved the *Confessions* with passion and fidelity, it was his Bible, and dearer to him than the dearest of his beloved Classics; *few things in the history of literature are more touching than this spiritual comradeship—Petrarch clasping hands with St. Augustine across the Lethe of nine mediæval centuries, the last man of the classic age and the first man of the modern mingling their souls in sympathy and sentiment;*[2] for more see his *Letters*, more particularly that to Friar Dionisio Roberti of Borgo San Sepolcro.[3] Montaigne read to be companionable with himself; Petrarch to be companionable with himself and with others; and all bookmen approximate to the one or the other, and by so doing arrive at the essence of this business of reading, whatever other purpose it may have.

III. VARIOUS TASTES OUTLINED

Let us peep a little farther into this mystery of variable tastes, to see if there be at least a common measure of bookishness, which I dare to say in advance it will not be difficult to prove. At the same time I know well that all readers, even the most omnivorous, do not at all times love or even like all books; this I sufficiently show in several places; but instances of the kind are countless, and as each has its particular cause and application, I may here cite a handful in order to clinch and bring home my present argument. Coleridge loved poetry, romance and mystical theology, and loathed rational philosophy; he

[1] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca*. i, 306. [2] J. A. Symonds, *Essays Speculative and Suggestive*. 297–8. [3] *Epistolae*. Fracassetti (Florence, 1859). iv, 1.

went to Durham to study *Duns Scotus* in the Chapter's Library, and he told Southey that he meant to put this old writer *on his feet again*, and *in order to wake him out of his present lethargy*, he said, *I am burning Locke, Hume, and Hobbes under his nose. They stink worse than feather or asafoetida;*[1] Macaulay, who could and did read almost everything with enjoyment, had so small a liking for the work of Horace Walpole that he believed *none but an unhealthy and disorganised mind could have produced such literary luxuries;*[2] *my father*, said J. S. Mill, *never was a great admirer of Shakespeare, the English idolatry of whom he used to attack with some severity;*[3] after reading *Rossetti*, Edward Dowden longed for *blown sea-breezes in verse and sea-smells to restore* his *vigour;*[4] John Burroughs found *something gruesome about Swinburne's poetry, like clammy and rapidly growing fungi;*[5] Coventry Patmore thought George Eliot an improper novelist,[6] Hazlitt, *a flashy and second-rate writer, with a certain gift of the gab*, suggesting genius,[7] and *Aurora Leigh* reminded him of *an ill-conditioned child jumping at the stars and stamping on the flowers;*[8] William Cory considered it necessary to recommend Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* as an *antidote for a love of Shelley;*[9] Dr. Johnson thought *Akenside* a *superior poet* to *Gray;*[10] Froude, in later life, found *Ovid wearisome and effeminate, an atheistical epicurean with neither Horace's humour nor Lucretius's grandeur to make up for his objectionable creed;*[11] Robert Louis Stevenson *would not give a chapter of old Dumas (meaning himself, not his collaborators) for the whole boiling of the Zolas*, which were no more to him than *romance with the smallpox;*[12] and W. B. Yeats so dislikes modern realistic plays that he condemns *Rosmersholm* for its *stale odour of spoilt poetry;*[13] to Aldous Huxley *Spenser* is no more than *a man with the conjuror's trick of extracting perfectly rhymed stanzas by the hundred out of an empty mind.*[14]

[1] *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 358. [2] 'Horace Walpole', *Essays.* (1872.) 267. [3] *Autobiography.* 16. [4] *Fragments from Old Letters.* 28. [5] *Indoor Studies*, 251. [6] *Memoirs.* Champneys. i, 363. [7] *Ib.* ii, 265. [8] *Ib.* ii, 186. [9] 'Table Talk' in *Gathered Leaves.* Mary E. Coleridge. 334. [10] *Life.* Ed. Hill. iii, 32. [11] *Oceana.* 24. [12] Stevenson, *Letters.* i, 234. [13] *Trembling of the Veil.* 158. [14] Huxley, *Jesting Pilate.* 57.

At the same time that which is more observable is the versatility of most bookfolk, despite grumbles and distempers, as I shall now proceed to exhibit. Benjamin Disraeli found Henry Bulmer's *France very amusing*, at a time when he was rereading *Heine*, and Raumer's *Historical Illustrations very curious, especially about Mary Queen of Scots;* and he rejoiced, as a young man, when Sir William Molesworth gave him *Hobbes* in eighteen volumes;[1] John, Earl of Orrery, tells Major Clelland that he is enjoying *Bussy, Rabutin, Palison, Voiture, Les Lettres Galantes etc. etc. etc.;*[2] Thomas Gray complains to Dr. Wharton that there are many *flimsy articles* in the great *Encyclopedia* which the French have just finished in seventeen volumes; that there are now thirteen volumes of Buffon's *Natural History*, and he is not yet come to the monkeys, *who are a numerous people*, and that although the *Life of Petrarch* has entertained him, it is not well written.[3]

Robert Burns reads assiduously to purpose, no bibliophile he, no dilettante. The inspired peasant sought knowledge, understanding, learning; thus as a boy he read the *Life of Hannibal*, and the *History of Sir William Wallace;* the first giving his *ideas such a turn* that he used *to strut in rapture up and down after the recruiting drum and bagpipes*, and the second *poured a Scottish prejudice into his veins which will boil till the flood-gates of life shut in eternal rest.* Then came adventures among such masters as Shakespeare and Pope, as well as Addison and Steele and others of their shining company, commingled with Tull and Dickson on *Agriculture*, Justice's *British Gardener's Directory*, *The Pantheon*, Locke *On the Human Understanding*, Stackhouse's *History of the Bible*, Boyle's *Lectures*, Allan Ramsay's *Works*, Taylor's *Scripture Doctrine of Original Sin*, and Hervey's *Meditations:* all of which proves that a poet is born, not made, *poeta nascitur non fit*, and that even *biblia a-biblia* cannot unmake him. He also read, more to his poetic purpose, *A Select Collection of English Songs* (which I have noted in its place); so he went on until his twenty-third year. *Vive l'amour, et vive la bagatelle*, are now his sole princi-

[1] *Correspondence with his Sister.* 232. [2] *Orrery.* 105, 45. [3] *Poems and Letters.* (1820.) 317.

ples of action, so he is greatly pleased by the addition to his library of Sterne's *Tristram Shandy* and Mackenzie's *Man of Feeling*.[1] At this time also he was *taken tooth and nail to the Bible . . . a really glorious book*,[2] and he celebrated his joy by procuring an *octavo* copy in sheets, *the best paper and print in town*, which he ordered his bookbinder to bedeck *with all the elegance of his craft*. His omnivorous book-appetite is proved by his orders to Peter Hill, the Edinburgh bookseller, from whom he demands works by Smollett, Otway, Ben Jonson, Dryden, Congreve, Wycherley, Vanbrugh, Cibber, Macklin, Garrick, Foote, Colman, Sheridan; and Molière, Racine, Corneille and Voltaire, in the French tongue; and, to end this list, an *Index* to the Excise Laws and an Abridgement of all Statutes *now in force* by Jellinger Symons.[3] Well may he advance that: *In the matter of books* he is *very profuse*.[4]

William Cowper admitted to Lady Hesketh that in three months he had read Savart's *Travels into Egypt*, Fenn's *Original Letters*, Madan's *Letters to Priestley*, the *Mémoires du Baron de Tott*, and those of Henri de Lorraine and the Duc de Guise; the *Letters* of Frederick of Bohemia, Barclay's *Argenis*, which he declares is *the best romance that ever was written;* and after all this rambling among now overgrown by-paths he concludes: *I am a great reader;*[5] and so he was, sucking the marrow even out of dull books, though he abstained from politics, which was his *abhorrence, being always hypothetical, fluctuating, and impracticable*, and Philosophy did not *suit* him.[6] In 1781, he told the Rev. William Unwin that he had read no poetry for thirteen years,[7] and he considered it an advantage, being *pretty much addicted to the writing of it*.[8] Yet he knew the bright books also, found consolation in them all like a true Epicurean, and even faced the approach of inclement winters without concern, though *a passionate lover of fine weather* (as who is not) *and the pleasant scenes of summer; but the long evenings have their comforts too, and there is hardly to be found upon earth*, he supposes, *so snug a creature as an Englishman by his fireside in the winter*, especially if one lives in the country, for in London one

[1] *Letters*. Scott. Lib. 66–9. [2] *Ib*. 94. [3] *Ib*. 246–7. [4] *Ib*. 11. [5] *Letters of William Cowper*. Frazer. ii, 129. [6] *Ib*. i, 262. [7] *Ib*. 158. [8] *Ib*. 262.

is not free from intrusion. *I have two ladies to read to, sometimes more, never less* (showing the wisdom that was his when his insanity was in abeyance). *At present we are circumnavigating the globe*, and he asks Joseph Hill to send him more voyages, books like Foster's, *to make the winter pass merrily.*[1]

Sir Philip Sidney doted on *Plutarch*, which so many have done and still do, and when in Venice (in 1573) he implored Hubert Lonquet to send him a copy in French from Vienna by some trader, for which he *would gladly* have given *five times the value*. He offers to send Lonquet *L' Historia del Mondo* of Tarchagnota, *Lettere de Principi*, *Lettere de Tredeci Illustre Homine*, *Impresse* of Girolamo Russelli, and *Il Stato de Venezia*, by Contarini and Donato Gianotti, all of them *interesting books.*[2] Such reading is proper for the student, and especially the patrician and the ambassador, though time marks many changes in the garden of history.

William Morris found time for reading as for everything else. Weaver, printer, designer, politician, poet, story-teller, he still read his favourite books: *Chaucer* and *Froissart*, old French *Romances*, Icelandic *Sagas* and the *Ring of the Niblungs;* Carlyle's *Past and Present* and *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, and Ruskin's *Nature of Gothic*, which he thought in future days would be considered *one of the very few necessary and inevitable utterances of the century;*[3] he revelled in *Dickens* (wanted to print him at the Kelmscott Press), *George Borrow*, *Surtees; Uncle Remus* and *Huckleberry Finn;* William Cobbett's *Rural Rides*, which he had almost by heart, and the novels of Thomas Love Peacock; all of which took up little of that time which he valued as his most precious possession, for, like Dr. Johnson and Lord Macaulay, *he tore the heart from a book with remarkable speed.*[4]

Thomas Carlyle, making an enjoyment of being annoyed at life, vexed himself with the reading of all varieties of books for recreation and condemnation. In his early years he read and grumbled incessantly. *It is not books that I want now*, he

[1] *Letters of William Cowper.* Frazer. i, 250–1. [2] *Correspondence of Sidney and Lonquet.* 9–10. [3] *Nature of Gothic.* 'Introduction.' (1899.) [4] *William Morris.* Holbrook Jackson. 54–5.

wrote to his brother (Dr. Carlyle) in 1836,[1] *but good sense and good spirits to make use of what I have* (three hundred volumes); *and I all biliousness and fret, and palpitating haste and bewilderment!* Out of a *considerable quantity of garbage* which he *allowed himself to devour*, he can name only Crabbe's poems as *worthy of being read;*[2] *Cicero de Officiis* read in comparison with *Chesterfield's Advice* should make us *blush for the eighteenth century;*[3] he could read but a volume of *Gibbon:* his style *too flowery; his sarcasms wicked; his notes oppressive, often beastly;*[4] *Byron* and *Scott* are to his liking, but still (in 1814) he prefers *Campbell* among modern poets; Hoole's *Tasso*, Dr. William Wilkie's now forgotten Epic, the *Epigoniad*, Wieland's *Oberon*, Savage's *Poems*, Miss Porter's *Scottish Chiefs*, and *Waverley* passed through the *tribulum* of his reading without censure;[5] but he sat up till four o'clock in the morning battering himself into luxurious indignation over Matt. Lewis's *Monk: the most stupid and villainous novel that I have read for a great while; considerable portions of it* being *grossly indecent, not to say brutish.*[6] He approved the *weightier kind of books:* Histories, Philosophies; *Homer* and all the Greeks and Romans; *Dante; Goethe;* but in old age his reading became *desultory, discontinuous, and insignificant;* he fed his spleen on Swift's *Gulliver and certain of his Essays and Poems*, all entertaining except *the Horse and Yahoo department*, which he found *extremely dirty and dull;*[7] the only book he read in October 1874 was Spedding's *Bacon*, and he found it *far from a seductive one!*[8] and nearer the end, the year before his flaming spirit was drenched out by death, he found peace in *Shakespeare* and Boswell's *Hebrides.*[9]

Lord Byron,[10] a tireless reader, though never *seen* reading; always seemed *idle and in mischief, or at play;* but the *truth is*, he confesses, *I read eating, read in bed, read when no one else reads;* he is also a choleric reader: he reads to scold and scorn, amusing himself mightily; he has no patience with the *sort of trash* his publisher sends out to him in Italy, except Scott's novels and *three or four other things;* never saw such works: *Campbell*

[1] *New Letters.* i, 3. [2] *Early Letters.* xii, 35. [3] *Ib.* vi, 17. [4] *Ib.* xx. [5] *Ib.* iii. [6] *Ib.* xviii. [7] *New Letters.* ii, 337. [8] *Ib.* ii, 308. [9] FitzGerald, *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 170. [10] *The Ravenna Journal.* 82.

is lecturing, Moore idling, Southey twaddling, Wordsworth drivelling, Coleridge muddling, Joanna Baillie piddling, Bowles quibbling, squabbling, and snivelling: No more modern poesy, I pray, neither Mrs. Hemans, nor any female or male Tadpole of Poet Wordsworth, nor any of his ragamuffins: No more Keats, I entreat:—flay him alive; if some of you don't I must skin him myself: there is no bearing the drivelling idiotism of the Mankin.[1]

The very worthy, industrious and curious[2] Mr. Samuel Pepys, diarist and man of affairs, confesses his bookish peccadilloes as frankly as those others which fell to his adventurous lot in old Rowlie's times: *To my bookseller's, and there bought Hooker's 'Polity', the new edition, and Dugdale's 'History of the Inns of Court', of which there was but few saved out of* the Fire of London, and *Playford's new 'Catch-book', that hath a great many new fooleries in it;*[3] William Penn's '*Truth Exalted*' was *a ridiculous nonsensical book* (so he wrote on October 12th, 1668) *so full of nothing but nonsense, that I was ashamed to read it;*[4] discussed *a new book of drollery*[5] with Mr. Battersly to such good effect that he must *needs go find it out, and met with it at the Temple* (for 2s. 6d.). *But when I come to read it, it is so silly an abuse of the Presbyter Knight going to the wars that I am ashamed of it; and by and by meeting at Mr. Townsend's at dinner I sold it to him for 18d.;*[6] in less than six weeks, *it being certainly some ill-humour to be so against that which all the world cries out to be the example of wit,* he hies him to a bookseller in the Strand and buys another copy, *resolved once more to read him;*[7] towards the end of that same year (1662) he goes abroad to Paul's Church Yard, and *there looked upon the second part,* which he cautiously borrows, *to see if it be as good as the first, which the world cry so mightily up, though it hath not a good liking in me, though I had tried by twice or three times reading to bring myself to think it witty;*[8] twelve days pass and once more Mr. Pepys to his bookseller and thereat buys the new part, *the book now in greatest fashion for drollery,* though he cannot, he confesses, *see enough where the wit lies,*[9] but he will be in the fashion in books as in most other things.

[1] *Letters and Journals.* xxii. [2] Evelyn, *Diary.* 26.v.1703. [3] Pepys, *Diary.* Wheatley. vi, 273. [4] *Ib.* viii. 122. [5] Butler's *Hudibras.* [6] *Diary,* ii, 425. [7] *Ib.* iii, 32. [8] *Ib.* iii, 361. [9] *Ib.* iii, 370–1.

Nor could he see aught but what was ridiculous in the *History of My Lord Newcastle, wrote by his wife, which shews her to be a mad, conceited, ridiculous woman, and he an asse to suffer her to write what she writes to him, and of him;*[1] he studies *Selden* and *Grotius* so that he may the better write *something about our making strangers to strike to us at sea;*[2] and his love of what is fine in books is so great that one Sunday at Sir Philip Warwick's as he sat in *a low room* reading *Erasmus de Scribendis Epistolis*, he was tempted to *tear out two leaves* which pleased him mightily—but, says he: *I forbore it.*[3] Nothing but the loss of his sight could absolve him from the passion for books and reading: *So to bed*, he writes on March 18th, 1668, my eyes very bad; *and I know not how in the world to abstain from reading;* little more than twelve months later his sight so fades that he has to close his beloved *Diary: which is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave, for which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me!*[4]

IV. OF BIBLIA A-BIBLIA

I must here insert some few further words on preferences, for, as I have already shown, the literary taste has an uneven surface, and there is a wide disparity between the predilections of readers, ranging from an enthusiastic universalism on the one part to a niggardly particularism on the other. *What any man can write, surely I may read*, said Lamb,[5] but even for him there are things in the shape of books which he *cannot allow for such.* Among *these books which are no books—biblia a-biblia*—he includes Court Calendars, Directories, Pocket Books; Draught Boards, bound and lettered on the back; Scientific Treatises, Almanacks, Statutes at Large; the works of Hume, Gibbon (in which few will support him), Robertson, Beattie, Soame Jenyns, and generally, all those volumes which *no gentleman's library should be without:* the Histories of Flavius Josephus (*that*

[1] *Diary.* Wheatley. vii, 368. [2] *Ib.* vii, 368. [3] *Ib.* vi, 149. [4] May 31st, 1669. [5] *Letters.* Everyman. i, 340.

learned Jew), and Paley's Moral Philosophy. *With these exceptions* (he repeats) *I can read almost anything*:[1] and he did, and none to better effect. He even read books which were given to him (a thing which Oliver Wendell Holmes said never happened).[2] He distilled the essence of books, following his whim, seeking ever the gleam of exquisite writing, adoring and fondling fine phrases and purple patches, quip, crank, oddity of style: euphuisms, fine shades, nice meanings; thus he came as an explorer in neglected realms upon the Elizabethans and the old Dramatists; revelled in *Shakespeare* before the days of bardolatry, and rediscovered *Izaak Walton*, and *Robert Burton*. *Among all your quaint reading*, he asks Coleridge, *did you ever light upon Walton's 'Complete Angler'? . . . it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity and simplicity of heart.*[3] Well may he bless his stars for *a taste so catholic, so unexcluding*,[4] thus supporting Southey's claim that *your true lover of literature is never fastidious;* for *a fastidious taste is like a squeamish appetite; the one has its origin in some distemper of the mind, as the other has in some ailment of the stomach.*[5]

Your true reader, as like as not, is what Leigh Hunt[6] calls *a universalist*, he puts up *with difference of opinion, by reason of his own very difference*, a right upheld in a *spirit of universal allowance*, not as *a privilege arrogated by conceit;* he loves all books because he is *a thorough human being*. The more you read the more you want to read: *pluris facio quum relego: semper ut novum, et quum repetivi, repetendum.*[7] Books stimulate the appetite which reading seeks to appease, and readers would have it so; all's fish that comes to their net, and as the born reader can read anywhere he can read anything, even *biblia a-biblia*, which are a matter of taste, whim, fancy, for, in the last resort, every man has his own *biblia a-biblia* as well as his *biblia*.

Théophile Gautier maintained that the *Dictionary* was the best reading for a poet; so enamoured was King Henry VIII of

[1] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.' [2] *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* [3] *Letters.* Everyman. i, 44. [4] Lamb, 'Detached Thoughts', *Last Essays of Elia.* [5] Southey, *Doctor.* xvii. [6] *A Book for a Corner.* Introductory. [7] Lipsius of *Epictetus.*

Roger Ascham's book on *Shooting* that he gave him a living for it;[1] when that good ambassador and scholar, Sir Henry Wotton, was at Venice, *ad annum* 1609, he found *the then principal subject of discourse* in Italy *our good Master's*[2] *excellent work* (*Apologia pro Juramento Fidelitatis*), *which the devil fain would hurt*, although France openly abused and Spain refused it.[3] Sir Thomas Bodley was prejudiced against plays, proclamations and almanacks, and he argued with Dr. James (his first Librarian) against these coming into his Library at Oxford, calling them *riffe-raffe* and *baggage bookes;* and there were *many pamphlets, not worth the custody in suche a Librarie;*[4] some plays, he thought, might be worth keeping, *but hardly one in fortie*, and having those few, (*suche is the nature of malicious reporters*) *would be mightily multiplied by suche as purpose to speake in disgrace of the Librarie;* if he erred in that opinion he thought he would *erre with infinit others.*[5]

Thomas Frognall Dibdin read, during his later years, little save title-pages and bibliography, for the purpose of his vast books in that science; but at college he read with gusto in many diverse authors, favouring history for the most part, as Rushworth's *Collections; Henry's History was a sort of 'Hortus Adonidis'*, always on his table, *his authorities by the side of him;* Hume was his *sofa companion*, and, *strange as may seem the juxtaposition*, Burton's *Anatomy* and Gibbon's *Decline and Fall were frequently lying upon the same sofa and table.*[6] Macaulay *was contented, when the humour took him, to amuse his solitary hours with such productions as Percival Stockdale's Memoirs, and the six volumes of Miss Anna Seward's Letters.*[7] On that curious tour in the Hebrides Dr. Johnson and Boswell read enthusiastically little but what we should account *biblia a-biblia*, such as Ogden's *Sermons on Prayer*, Bishop Gastrell's *Christian Institutes*, Derham's *Physico-Theology*, Drummond's *Travels*, Daille *On the Fathers*, Lucas *On Happiness*, Gregory's *Geometry*, Gataker *On Lots* and on the *Christian Watch* (*a very*

[1] Ascham, *Letter to Queen Elizabeth.* Mumby. 5–6. [2] James I. [3] *Life and Letters of Wotton.* Smith. i, 462. [4] *Letters to Thomas James.* [5] *Ib.* 222. [6] *Reminiscences.* i, 88–90. [7] Trevelyan, *Marginal Notes by Lord Macaulay.* 5.

learned book, comments Boswell, to which Johnson assents, describing it *as a treasure*), More's *Dialogues*, and other works now pretty generally forgotten or accounted dull and unreadable; but enjoy them as they did they were not averse from dipping into Ovid's *Epistles*, Burnet's *History of Our Own Times*, and *The Bible*.[1] Samuel Pepys, as I have shown, could not make up his mind whether *Hudibras* was dull or bright, but Charles II had no doubts, and *used to carry in his pocket a copy* of that work given him by Buckhurst.[2]

There are, as we know, those who seek to lay down the law in this matter of dullness, but all those who so vigorously take sides do no more than add to the confusion. Even sound and reliable bookmen are not agreed upon an acceptable definition of *biblia a-biblia*. I have shown up Lamb, now let us look at some modern authorities. *I call nothing a book*, says Garrod, *which does not address a large part of its appeal to imagination and emotion*. Consistently with this formula he rules out all books, *however important to mankind*, which aim at *instruction and information rather than at delight and edification;* thus he sweeps aside Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*, together with the logarithmic tables, books of dates, spelling books and Latin grammars.[3] This opinion would blend with Thoreau's contention that *dullness is but another name for tameness*, for it is wildness which attracts us: *It is the uncivilised free and wild thinking in 'Hamlet' and the 'Iliad', in all the Scriptures and Mythologies, not learned in the schools, that delight us*. He goes even farther by declaring that as *the wild duck is more swift and beautiful than the tame*, so is *the wild—the mallard—thought;* a *truly good book* (excellence being his test of brightness) *is something as natural, and as unexpectedly and unaccountably fair and perfect, as a wild flower discovered on the prairies of the West or in the jungles of the East*. But the excellence which he approves in wild and unexpected words and themes is the excellence of genius, which, as he sets it out, is the sole preventative of dullness. *Genius*, he advertises, is *a light which makes the darkness*

[1] *Life*. Ed. Hill. v, 294. [2] Louise Imogen Guiney, *Patrins*. 308. [3] *Profession of Poetry*. 254.

visible, like the lightning's flash, which perchance shatters the temple of knowledge itself.[1]

Arnold Bennett may now be invited to bring this argument out of the empyrean and restore it to earth. *The test of a first-rate work*, he holds, *and*, he adds, *a test of your sincerity in calling it a first-rate work, is that you finish it.* If you cannot stay the course, the book is *either dull or tiresome*, and *all dull books are bad, and all tiresome books are either bad or maladroit or both.*[2] On the other hand, and I would have you concentrate upon this, Sir Leslie Stephen, and some other good witnesses, advance the plea that dullness is not absolutely and irrevocably dull, but may, on occasion and not seldom, be so capricious as to be bright and dull at one and the same time. *Nobody*, says Stephen, *ever wrote a dull autobiography*, and even if he did *the very dullness would be interesting.*[3] Robert Louis Stevenson went farther still, for, in certain moods, he preferred to read dull books. At such times he revelled in the two large folios of *Fountainhall*, which is *all dreary, and all true, and all as terse as an obituary; and about one interesting fact on an average in twenty pages, and ten of them unintelligible for technicalities.*[4] Many, he points out, find Dostoieffsky's *Crime and Punishment* dull. Henry James could not finish it; but Stevenson thought it *the greatest book he had read in ten years*, although reading it *nearly finished him, it was like having an illness.*[5] But he was not always revelling in the leviathan dullness of genius, nor yet indulging in dullness for its own sake: sometimes he plodded through deserts of prose in the hope of reaching an oasis where he could rest amid the palms and slake his thirst, as with those unreadable romances *The Cavalier* and *Morley Ernstein*, which he found in the Franklin County Library at Saranac. He read the first with *indescribable amusement;* it *was worse than he had feared*, yet *somehow engaging*. The second, to his surprise, was better than he had dared to hope: *a good, honest, dull, interesting tale*, with *a genuine old-fashioned feeling for the English language*, which *awoke appetite.*[6] Despite, however, these diverse opinions and experiences I find no mystery in this problem, and very little

[1] *Essays*. Scott. Lib. 19. [2] *Things that have Interested Me*. 90–1. [3] *Hours in a Library*. iv, 185. [4] *Letters*. ii, 299. [5] *Ib*. 20. [6] *Ib*. 95.

problem, for, as I have shown, and shall show again from more than one angle, we read into books what is in ourselves, reading being as much a process of digging ourselves out, developing ourselves as chemicals develop a photographic plate, as a process for digging out the author or his ideas and fancies. *We find little in a book but what we put there*;[1] for, as Vernon Lee discovers, in *literature, the pattern is made of us; not merely of our own soul's motions, but of our memory's contents.*[2] The greater the book the more room it will find for the reader. Dullness is a mutable condition, in books as in persons (including ourselves); it varies as we do; changes with our attitudes. So if there are many dull books, the dullest of them, as a later writer observes, *may become potential Ophirs and Golcondas, if we are looking for something as we read.*[3] No country is dull if the hunting is good. Voltaire, says Joubert, *would have patiently read through thirty or forty folio volumes to find one small irreligious joke;*[4] he would have enjoyed the task. Which explains Stevenson's appetite, and allows me to proceed to my next point.

Montaigne found *Cicero* dull because he engaged in rhetoric for its own sake. Plutarch's '*Lives*' *were his Bible, as far as he had any Bible,*[5] in which preference he hath several companions, but I can find few among ancient bookmen who share his dislike for *Cicero;* yet it is unnecessary to proceed with examples of such preferences, for the unendurable in literature is relative; what is dull and what is bright in reading, as in so many other things, is according to taste; one likes this, another that. *This will never do!* exclaimed Jeffrey when he opened Wordsworth's *Excursion,*[6] but Coventry Patmore thought that work *the greatest poem in our language, if not in any, not excepting that of the 'Divine Comedy'.*[7] So, in times present, those who revel in *Edgar Wallace* and *Elinor Glyn* wilt under *Ulysses* and *Pruefrock;* to the reader of *East Lynne, Point Counter Point* is unreadable; *Jude the Obscure* is dull to the

[1] Joubert, *Selected Thoughts.* Trans. Lyttleton. 190. [2] *Handling of Words.* 83. [3] John Livingstone Lowes, *Of Reading Books.* 147. [4] *Op. cit.* 177. [5] Edith Sichel, *Montaigne.* 58. [6] *Edinburgh Review,* Nov. 1814. [7] *Memoirs.* Champneys. ii, 98.

devotees of *Far from the Madding Crowd;* to some *The Egoist* is obscure and to others *Anna Livia Plurabelle* is lucid; Dickensians and Proustians speak different languages; the generation which could not enjoy *Keats* and *Shelley*, revelled in Zimmerman *On Solitude* and Dodderidge *On Death;* the *Proverbial Philosophy* was a bible in early Victorian parlours; *Festus* was popular when *Blake* was neglected; *Leaves of Grass* and *Bradshaw's Railway Guide*, wrongly approached, are equally unintelligible and uninteresting; many who like Bernard Shaw's *Plays* loathe his *Prefaces; Sitwells* and *Munros* do not mix; *Ezra Pounds* and *Richard Le Galliennes*, produced ever so far, do not meet. Macaulay[1] would walk for miles out of Cambridge to meet the coach bringing in the latest Waverley novel. *Waverley* itself made Scott's fortune and thousands of novel readers content; yet, Arnold Bennett[2] argues, *not one in a hundred could read it to-day*, and if he himself were asked to re-read it he would demand a fee of *fifty guineas for the feat.*

How the principles underlying this faculty of reading are distinguished and connected is (up to now) beyond human capacity to explain. Reasons in support of one side or the other do no more than buttress prejudices or idiosyncrasies. *The measure of choosing well is*, as Sir William Temple discovers in his essay '*Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*', *whether a man likes what he has chosen.* I shall hold on to that supposal, and end, therefore, with the most charitable advice I can give to my erring brethren (if such a charge can be brought against any of them): it is, to follow your whim, *gnaw your own bone*, as Thoreau enjoined, and let fancy decide, as Montaigne did: *I love no books*, he confessed, *but such as are pleasant and easie, and which tickle me, or such*, he added, *as comfort and counsell me, to direct my life and death*,[3]

> tacitum silvas inter reptare salubres
> Curantem quidquid dignum sapiente bonoque est.[4]
>
> Silently creeping midst the wholesome wood
> With care what's for a wise man and a good.

And in his essay *Of Books*, he makes no pompous pose: *There*

[1] Trevelyan, *Macaulay*. ii, 458. [2] *Evening Standard*. 6.i.27. [3] *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 311. [4] Horace, *I. Ep.* iv, 4.

is nothing I will trouble or vex myselfe about, no not for science it selfe, what esteem soever it be of. I do not search and tosse over Books, but for an honest recreation to please, and pastime to delight my selfe. And if he studies, it is only to find out the knowledge of himself, or, as aforesaid, to instruct himself how *to die well, and how to live well.* The man of *robust and healthy intellect,* says Southey, *who gathers the harvest of literature into his barns, threshes the straw, winnows the grain, grinds it at his own mill, bakes it in his own oven, and then eats the true bread of knowledge,* is on the right track, and, *if he bake his loaf upon a cabbage leaf, and eat onions with his bread and cheese, let who will find fault with him for his taste—not I!*[1] In the last resort all proper bookmen are of his opinion, and they can exclaim out of *Horace,* with Archdeacon Wrangham, *stretching himself at length in his Elizabethan chair, in the midst of his Plantins and Elzevirs:*[2]

> Sit bona librorum et provisae frugis in annum
> Copia, neu fluitem dubiae spe pendulus horae.
> Sed satis est orare Iovem, quae ponit et aufert,
> Det vitam, det opes; aequum mi animum ipse parabo.[3]

V. BOOKS PREFERRED ABOVE ALL THINGS

Julius Scaliger[4] was so much affected with Poetry, that he declared he had rather be the author of twelve verses in *Lucan,* or such an ode (*Lib.* iii, *Ode* 9) in *Horace,* than Emperor of Germany, much as our General Wolfe exclaimed to his officers in the boat as they crossed the St. Lawrence River to the storming of the Heights, that he would sooner be the author of Gray's *Elegy* than take Quebec.[5] Nicholas Gerbelius is so much ravished with a few Greek authors, then recently restored to light, that he believes, *Arabibus atque Indis omnibus erimus*

[1] *Doctor.* xvii. [2] Dibdin, *Reminiscences.* i, 394–5. [3] *I. Ep.* xviii, 109–12. 'Let me have good store of books and assured food supply for the year, nor live in a flutter of doubtful hopes. 'Tis enough to pray to Jove for those things which he grants and takes away—the gift of life, of wealth: a contented mind I will get for myself.' [4] Qt. Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 104. [5] Timbs, *Anecdotes.* 309.

ditiores, we shall be richer than all the Arabian or Indian Princes; Seneca prefers *Zeno* and *Chrysippus*, two *doting Stoicks*, before any Prince or General of an Army; and Orontius the Mathematician so far admires *Archimedes*, that he calls him *divinum & hominem majorem;* yet I say with Burton, I stand not upon this nor any praise likening authors to Gods or demi-Gods; the delight is what I aim at: the obvious great pleasure, the certain, sweet content. *When I was literally starving in London*, Gissing[1] confesses, *when it seemed impossible that I should ever gain a living by my pen, how many days have I spent at the British Museum, reading as disinterestedly as if I had been without a care! Quod cibus corpori, lectio animae facit*,[2] as meat to the body, so is reading to the soul.

Literature proved both an *entertainment* and a *consolation* to Pliny; there was no *pleasure* he would prefer to it,[3] and he *was glad to devote the leisure to literature* which others *throw away on idle employment*.[4] Pope would rather be employed in reading than in the most agreeable conversation;[5] Gibbon would not exchange his *invincible love of reading* for *the treasures of India*.[6] *When I open a noble volume*, Hamerton testifies,[7] *I say to myself, 'Now the only Croesus that I envy is he who is reading a better book than this'*. Some go so far as to acclaim books the superiors of life: *People say that life is the thing, but I prefer reading*.[8] To be at leisure without books is another Hell, and to be buried alive, but to be opportunely buried in books is Heaven:

> I will bury myself in books, and the Devil may pipe to his own.[9]

King James, in 1605, when he came to our University of Oxford, and, amongst other edifices, went to view that famous Library, renewed by Sir Thomas Bodley, at his departure said, *If I were not a King, I would be an university man;*

[1] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. 45. [2] Seneca. [3] *Letters*. Melmoth. Loeb Ed. viii, 19. [4] 'Per hos dies libentissime otium meum in litteris colloco quos alii otiosissimis occupationibus perdunt.' *Letters*. Melmoth. Loeb Ed. ix, 6. [5] Spence, *Anecdotes*. (1858.) 208. [6] *Memoirs*. Ed. Hill. 38. [7] *Intellectual Life*. 192. [8] Logan Pearsall Smith, 'Afterthoughts', *Life and Letters*. Aug. 1930. [9] *Maud*. Tennyson.

and if it were so that I must be a prisoner, if I might have my wish, I would desire to have no other prison than that Library, and to be chained together with so many good authors et mortuis magistris.[1] Heinsius, the keeper of the Library at Leyden, in Holland, was mewed up in it all the year long, and that which should have bred a loathing caused in him a great liking: *I no sooner* (saith he) *come into the Library, but I bolt the door to me, excluding lust, ambition, avarice, and all such vices, whose nurse is idleness, the mother of ignorance, and Melancholy herself, and in the very lap of eternity, amongst so many divine souls, I take my seat, with so lofty a spirit and sweet content, that I pity all our great ones, and rich men that know not this happiness.*[2] So do great readers rise to great heights: pitying rich and powerful men, seeing nothing in them but poverty and lack of happiness. *Of all the human relaxations which are free from guilt,* exclaims that capacious reader, Sir Egerton Brydges,[3] *none so dignified as reading.*

Nothing so precious, for such as are *fracti animis,* troubled in mind, to ease them, over-toiled on the one part, to refresh: over-idle on the other, to keep themselves busied. How many of the masters of the world have solaced their leisure with books! *Among the great men of action, we recall Frederick's love of letters and Napoleon's travelling library; among statesmen we think of Pitt's sofa with its shelf of thumbed classics; and of Fox, a far more ardent lover of books, exchanging them and his garden for the House of Commons almost with tears; and of Gladstone's Temple of Peace.*[4] Books were Napoleon's solace throughout life; in his subaltern days he sacrificed all thought of luxuries so that he could buy books. To avoid comment from his brother officers, he tells Caulaincourt,[5] *I lived alone like a hermit, in a little room with my books—then my only friends. What strict economy it required even in the necessaries of life before I could allow myself the pleasure of purchasing them! When I had managed to save up two crowns by dint of stern self-denial, I wended my way to the bookseller's as pleased as a child, and I examined his shelves long and anxiously before my purse would*

[1] Qt. Burton. *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 105. [2] *Ib.* 105. [3] *The Ruminator.* No. 24. [4] Lord Rosebery, *Appreciations and Addresses.* 168. [5] Qt. Fournier. i, 33, out of *Coston.* i, 189.

allow me to gratify my desires. Among the books he read at this time—*pen in hand*, saith Fournier, *and making copious notes*—were Duvernet's *History of the Sorbonne*, William Cox's *Travels in Switzerland*, Dulaure's *History of the Nobility*, Le Noble's *Esprit Gersons*, Machiavelli's *Florentine History*, Meissner's *Alcibiades*, Duclos's *Government of Louis XIV and XV*, Bernardine de St. Pierre's *Indian Tales*, Marmontel's *Incas*, Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*, and Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs et l'esprit des nations.*

Of statesmen who have stored their minds and consoled their leisure with books, Lord Rosebery[1] has several examples. Harley was a collector rather than a reader, a bibliomane perchance; Bolingbroke claimed to be a book-lover, and spent his exile in the study of history; Stanhope, Sunderland, and Grenville formed great libraries; Canning was a bookman; Melbourne a great reader, though he only left behind him *a library of odd volumes;* Peel, *a brilliant specimen of Oxford scholarship;* Disraeli, who was cradled among books, was more bookish than Gladstone *in early, and less in later life;* Salisbury was a bookman from early days. *When I was a child*, Lord Rosebery recounts, *I was taken to see Hatfield. In the library we saw a tall thin figure carrying a huge volume. The housekeeper paused, saying with awe, 'That is Lord Robert Cecil'.* That bookish figure afterwards became Lord Salisbury and Prime Minister. I can complete Lord Rosebery's tale out of common knowledge, by naming himself as a bookman, among succeeding Prime Ministers, together with Lord Balfour, Lord Oxford and Mr. Baldwin. Benito Mussolini finds little time for reading in his busy days, but such as he does find he devotes to serious books. *Novels are seldom included*, he confesses, but he enjoys *reading again and again the classics, philosophy, and books on economics or philosophy.*[2]

Well may Cardan call a Library the Physick of the soul; *for divine authors fortify the mind, make men bold and constant; and* (as Hyperius adds) *godly conference will not permit the mind to be tortured with absurd cogitations.*[3] All this variety of sense is

[1] *Appreciations and Addresses.* 152–7. [2] *Daily Express.* 17.i.27. [3] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 107–8.

intended by the fancy of that responsible witness, Francis Bacon,[1] where he proclaims that, *Reading maketh a full man; Conference a ready man; and Writing an exact man;* so *if a man Write little, he had need have a great memory; if he Confer little, he need have a present wit; and if he Read little, he had need have much cunning to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise, Poets witty, the Mathematicks subtil, Natural Philosophy deep, Moral grave, Logick and Rhetorick, able to contend. Abeunt studia in Mores; Nay there is no Stand or Impediment in the wit, but may be wrought out by fit Studies.* But whether for study or dalliance there is no difference: books command their lovers, and when they tell over to themselves tales of what they have read, it is as sweet music. In pursuance of this truth, Izaak Walton records of Bishop Sanderson[2] that the repetition of one of the *Odes of Horace* to himself *was to him such music, as a Lesson on the Viol was to others, when they played it to themselves or friends.*

VI. THE GENESIS OF BOOKMEN

The claims of education, as a cause of bookishness, may justly be challenged; even the accidental presence of books in small or great numbers is no inducement except when opportunity and inclination coincide. Bookishness arises mysteriously out of the hidden consciousness, from some unknown predisposition which our psychologists have not yet explained. Nor shall I adventure in those uncertain realms; rushing in where Angels fear to tread is not my humour: I risk no such abandonment. This treatise is reasonably developed from example and precedent to inference and conclusion; yet I am well aware that this matter of early reading is germane to my purpose, for the child is father of the man, and it is no fault of mine if the argument ends in the paradox that one man's meat is another's poison,

> What porridge had John Keats?[3]

[1] *Essays.* 'Of Studies.' [2] *Life of Dr. Sanderson.* [3] Browning.

We cannot answer, nor can we answer what porridge makes great readers.

This much, however, I can say and shall prove, namely, that they begin young and not necessarily with children's books; nor yet are they attracted by those religious works which have consoled so many grown men and women. Doubtless the young, like so many of their elders, have an inclination against books which they ought to read, and it perchance was in irony that Henry Fielding[1] made young Joseph Andrews a devoted reader of the *Bible*, the *Whole Duty of Man*, *Thomas à Kempis*, and *as often as he could, without being perceived*, that *great book which lay open in the hall window*, wherein he learnt *how the devil had carried away half a church in sermon-time, without hurting one of the congregation; and how a field of corn run down a hill, with all the trees upon it, and covered another man's meadow;* which sufficiently assured Parson Adams that the good book meant could be no other than Baker's *Chronicle*.

Not all readers remember how they came to read, for reading is learnt rather than taught, and the ease with which so many acquire it proves it one of mankind's most natural endowments. Men must be reading. Before books were they read the stars, the winds, movements of birds and beasts; beginning early, moved by instinct as much as or even more than by brain. So with books. There are many examples of early bookish instincts, but I will only point at some of the chiefest, as that of Hsiao Tsung, eldest son of the founder of the Liang dynasty in China, who is reported to have learnt the *Classics by heart* before he was five years old.[2] But for notable examples we need not wander beyond our own frontiers, or times present.

Take then, as a first instance, the extraordinary example of John Stuart Mill,[3] who must have read books in his cradle, for he began to learn Greek at three years old: Aesop's *Fables* his first book and the *Anabasis* his second. He had no Latin until he had reached the advanced age of eight, and by that

[1] *Joseph Andrews*. iii. [2] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 283. [3] *Autobiography*. Passim.

time he had been through the whole of *Herodotus*, Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and *Memorials of Socrates*, some of the lives of the philosophers by Diogenes Laertius, part of *Lucian*, the *Iliad*, *Isocrates ad Demonicum* and *Ad Nicoclem*, the *first six dialogues (in the common arrangement) of Plato, from the Euthyphron to the Theaetetus inclusive*, but, he doubts not, the last *would have been better omitted, as it was totally impossible I should understand it*. Between the ages of four years and seven he would take daily walks with his father *before breakfast, generally in the green lanes towards Hornsey*, and with his earliest recollections of *green fields and wild flowers, is mingled that of the account* he gave his father of what he had read the day before; and to the best of his remembrance this was *a voluntary rather than a prescribed exercise;* he made notes on *slips of paper* while reading and took up his tale from them. The books thus read and discussed were *chiefly histories*, of which he had absorbed *in this manner a great number: Robertson, Hume, Gibbon*, and *Burnet*, among them; but his greatest delight was Watson's *Philip II and III. The heroic defence of the Knights of Malta against the Turks, and of the revolted Provinces of the Netherlands against Spain, excited in him an intense and lasting interest.* Next to *Watson* his favourite was Hooke's *History of Rome;* of Greek history he had up to then little knowledge save of *school abridgements* and *Rollin;* but he read with *great delight* Langhorne's *Plutarch;* that he was still young is evident in some measure from his confession that in *Burnet* his main interest was *wars and battles*. His father borrowed from Mr. Bentham copies of the *Annual Register* from the beginning to about 1788, and the young scholar felt a lively interest in Frederick of Prussia and Paoli of Corsica, but his tender years asserted themselves again, for he gives out that when he came to the American war, *I took my part, like a child as I was (until set right by my father) on the wrong side, because it was called the English side.*

His father also made him read books which might not have interested him otherwise, as Millar's *Historical View of the English Government*, Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, McCrie's *John Knox*, and *even* Sewell and Rutty's *Histories of the Quakers.*

He was also encouraged to read *books which exhibited men of energy and resource in unusual circumstances*, as Beaver's *African Memoranda*, Collins's *New South Wales*, and he never wearied of *Anson's* and *Hawkesworth's Voyages;* but of *children's books, any more than of playthings*, he had *scarcely any*, except *an occasional gift* from a relative or acquaintance, notable among them, *Robinson Crusoe*, which delighted him throughout his boyhood. It was no part of his *father's system to exclude books of amusement*, so long as they were used *sparingly;* and owning none himself, he borrowed, and the boy thus came to possess happy memories of the *Arabian Nights*, Gazotte's *Arabian Tales*, *Don Quixote*, Miss Edgeworth's *Popular Tales*, and Brooke's *Fool of Quality;* and so he goes on, but, for further details, read him.

Many instances could be cited in support of the argument that great readers start early: *Even from my infancie*, says Montaigne, *Poesie hath had the vertue to transpierce and transport me;*[1] and sometimes so early that they forget the time. Abraham Cowley, a notable prodigy of book-love, confessed[2] that, when a very young boy at school, *instead of running about on Holy-daies* and playing with his fellows, he was wont to steal away from them, *and walk into the fields*, either *alone with a Book, or with some one companion*, if he could find one *of the same temper*. Very early he became acquainted with the poets, so that their *characters* were *engraved* in him, like *Letters cut into the Bark of a young tree;* but he cannot tell how this love came to be produced in him so early. In the meantime he recalls the *particular little chance* that filled his head with the *Chimes of Verse*. When he began to read, and to take some pleasure in it, there was wont to lie in his Mother's Parlour (*I know not by what accident*, he says, *for she herself never in her life read any Book but of Devotion*) a copy of Spenser's *Works*. He happened to fall upon the book, and was first *infinitely delighted* with the stories of Knights, Giants, Monsters, etc., and later *by degrees with the tinkling of the Rhyme and the Dance of*

[1] 'Of Cato the Younger', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 292. [2] *Essays*. 'Of Myself.'

the Numbers, so that, he concludes, *I think I had read him all over before I was twelve years old.*

William Morris must have been able to read as an infant: for neither he nor any member of his family knew exactly when he learnt; at four he was deep in the *Waverley Novels* and at seven he had devoured *Scott*, most of *Marryat*, and Lane's *Arabian Nights*.[1] So also his contemporary William Allingham who says, *I could read fluently at a very early age, and I remember nothing of being taught.*[2] Andrew Lang was a *bookworm from babyhood, almost.*[3] Edmund Gosse was slow in learning to speak, and he was told that, having resisted all attempts to make him say *papa* and *mama*, he one day caught hold of a volume and said *book* with *startling distinctness;* he learned to read at four, and could not recall a time when *a printed page of English was closed* to him;[4] but it was not until his eighth year that he was initiated into *the magic of literature.* This experience came whilst his father was reading the *Bible* to him. *I was incapable of defining what I felt,* he says, *but I certainly had a grip in the throat, which was in its essence a purely aesthetic emotion.*[5] The magic casement of poetry was opened by Virgil some few years later. One evening his father took down *Virgil*, and began to murmur, oblivious of the lad's presence, some of *the adorable verses by memory*

> tu, Tityre, lentus in umbra
> Formosum resonare doces Amaryllida silvas.

The boy *listened as if to a nightingale.* The lines meant nothing to him, *but a miracle had been revealed to* him, *the incalculable, the amazing beauty which could exist in the sound of verses.* His *prosodical instinct was awakened on that instant: Verse, 'a breeze mid blossoms playing', as Coleridge says, descended from the roses as a moth might have done,* and *the magic of it took hold of his heart for ever.*[6]

Henry Bradshaw could read at the age of three or four years, and when still a boy at Eton, he was already *a lover of books*

[1] *Morris.* Jackson. 11. [2] *Diary.* 13. [3] Intro., *Pleasures of Bookland,* Shaylor. xviii. [4] Gosse, *Father and Son.* (1909.) 19. [5] *Ib.* 89. [6] *Ib.* 168–9.

with a library of five hundred which included works *not often found in a boy's library, such* as the *Officium Beatae Mariae* (Antwerp, 1564), a *Bede* printed at Cologne in 1501, and the *Odes* of Horace (Amsterdam, 1686). At the age of fourteen he remembered going to Durham and being locked in Bishop Cosin's library in that city, where he worked all day at *Strabo* or any books he could find on the geography of the Crimea.[1] He spent the greater part of his playtime at Eton in the Hawtrey's Library, *one of the most delightful reading-rooms in the world.* Bibliography and philology already interested him and he explored *Dibdin* and *Ducange;* he worked at divinity too, filling the margins of his *Bible* with careful references. But his chief study was our English literature, and in one year he read through all the standard poets, including the whole of *Spenser* and *Chaucer*, finding time also for some of the moderns, particularly *Tennyson.*[2]

Harriet Martineau knew *Paradise Lost* almost by heart at the age of seven;[3] Swift *could read any chapter of the Bible before he was three;*[4] Maurice Hewlett read the *Faerie Queene* when nine years old;[5] Walter Scott would pore over *Shakespeare* in his shirt by the fire at night after his parents had left him in bed;[6] Lord Byron read perpetually from the age of five, and the *moment* he *could read* his *grand passion was history;*[7] Thackeray when young revelled in *Scott*, recalling joyously in after life *the type and the brownish paper of the old duodecimo* '*Tales of My Landlord*', and he longed for the old joy of a half-holiday, a quiet corner and *those books again;*[8] Samuel Rogers had read enthusiastically *The Minstrel* of Beattie at the age of eight; when he was twelve, Gray's *Poems* and *Letters* captivated him, and a few years later he *walked to business* with a volume of Gray's poems in his hand, and he could repeat them all;[9] Coventry Patmore had read and studied *critically, all the standard poetry and much of the best secular prose in our language,*[10]

[1] Prothero, *Memoir.* 9–10. [2] *Ib.* 13–14. [3] *Autobiography.* 1, 42. [4] *Swift.* Leslie Stephen, 3. [5] *Extemporary Essays.* 118. [6] *Life.* Lockhart. i, 49. [7] *The Ravenna Journal.* 29, 82. [8] *Roundabout Papers.* [9] Clayden, *Early Life of Samuel Rogers.* 57–8. [10] *Memoirs.* Champneys. ii, 43.

before the age of fifteen; and *Waller, Spenser,* and *Dryden, were Mr. Pope's great favourites, in the order they are named, in his first reading till he was about twelve years old.*[1]

Alexander Ireland, the compiler of the *Book Lover's Enchiridion,* tells us that when a boy he was so delighted with the *Natural History of Selborne,* that *in order to possess a copy of his own he actually copied out the whole work.*[2] Charles Dickens has recounted in *David Copperfield* how books consoled and upheld him during his neglected boyhood; how *Roderick Random, Peregrine Pickle, Humphrey Clinker, Tom Jones, the Vicar of Wakefield, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Robinson Crusoe, the Arabian Nights and Tales of the Genii, a glorious host, kept him company, kept alive his fancy and his hope, beyond that time and place.* Goethe was interested in books from early childhood, and when he passed out of the age of picture-books he discovered Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* the first parts of which he *studied carefully;* but these *somewhat coarse and questionable antiquities* were replaced by Fénelon's *Télémaque; Robinson Crusoe* was *added betimes,* and then the *Island of Felsenberg* and Anson's *Voyage Round the World;* he has enthusiastic memories of how he and his brothers and sisters revelled in the *Volksbücher,* or, as we say, *Chap-books, precious Survivals from the Middle Ages;* they were printed from *stereotypes* on *hideous absorbent paper* and *barely legible,* but these were advantages, for when they had read, *worn out, or otherwise damaged* the *Eulenspiegel, Fair Melusina,* the *Wandering Jew,* and the rest, they could easily procure more and renew a feast which they preferred to sweetmeats.[3]

Wordsworth as a child was an omnivorous reader, devouring such books as *Tom Jones, Don Quixote, Gil Blas, Gulliver's Travels* and *The Tale of a Tub;*[4] and between nine and ten years of age he first tasted the flavour of poetry:

> Twice five years
> Or less I might have seen, when first my mind

[1] Spence, *Anecdotes.* (1858.) 6. [2] Lubbock, *Pleasures of Life.* i, 60. [3] *Poetry and Truth* (Dichtung und Wahrheit). Trans. M. S. Smith. i, 23–5. [4] *Memoirs of Wordsworth,* by Christopher Wordsworth. (1857.) i, 10.

> With conscious pleasure opened to the charm
> Of words in tuneful order, found them sweet
> For their own sakes, a passion, and a power;
> And phrases pleased me chosen for delight,
> For pomp, or love.[1]

At six years old, Frederick W. Myers read *Virgil* with the help of an interlinear translation given him by his father;[2] he never forgot the experience; the scene was stamped on his mind: *the ante-room at the Parsonage with its floor of bright matting, and its glass door into the garden, through which the flooding sunlight came, while I pored over the new revelation with awe-struck joy;*

> Musa, mihi causas memora, quo numine laeso—[3]

this *early burst of admiration for Virgil* was followed by a *growing passion for one after another of the Greek and Latin poets;* from ten to sixteen he *lived much in the inward recital of Homer, Aeschylus, Lucretius, Horace and Ovid;* the reading of Plato's *Gorgias* at fourteen was a *great event,* but the study of the *Phaedo* at sixteen effected upon him *a kind of conversion;* the discovery of *Sappho,* at seventeen, *brought an access of intoxicating joy;* but he always returned to *Virgil,* of whose mind he ever was *the most intimate and adoring disciple.*[4]

At the age of seven Francis Thompson *was reading poetry, and, overwhelmed by feelings of which he knew not the meaning, had found his way to the heart of Shakespeare and Coleridge;*[5] at the age of nine Stanley Baldwin had read Malory's *Morte d'Arthur* and knew *Peter Simple* and *Midshipman Easy* by heart;[6] Eugene Field coveted the books in his grandmother's case when he was seven, *and,* he says, *I had learned to read I know not when,* but at that age he was familiar not only with the *Hymns* of Watts and Wesley, but with the *Annual Reports* of the American Tract Society.[7] John Addington Symonds read and was deeply moved by Shakespeare's *Venus and Adonis* at the age of ten;[8] from the time he was three years old

[1] *Prelude.* v, 552–8. [2] Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry.* 6. [3] Virgil, *Aen.* i, 8. [4] Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry.* 17–18. [5] Everard Meynell, *Francis Thompson.* 6. [6] 'Books', *Our Inheritance.* 288–92. [7] *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* 7. [8] *Biography.* H. F. Brown. 10.

Macaulay read incessantly at all times and places, becoming, perhaps, the world's greatest reader; as a child he loved to read lying on the rug before the fire, his book on the rug, and a piece of bread and butter in his hand; *a very clever woman who then lived in the house* [at Clapham] *tells how he used to sit in his nankeen frock, perched on the table by her as she was cleaning the plate, and expounding to her out of a volume as big as himself.* Books were his toys, and when taking a walk he loved to expound to mother or nurse, in language far above his years, what he had been reading.[1] John Ruskin, on the other hand, like John Stuart Mill, was trained to books by his parents; they read to him and he to them. His mother trained him in the Bible: chapter by chapter of every book, year by year; and his father read to him *Shakespeare*, *Scott*, *Don Quixote*, *Pope*, and *Byron*, and most English classics; and *at five he was a bookworm.*[2]

Leigh Hunt[3] was a reader at an early age, but he disliked the *Classics*, had no regard for *Ovid*, knew nothing of *Horace*, regarded *Homer* with *horror*, but was inclined to admire *Demosthenes*. His real loves were the *Arabian Nights*, the *Canterbury Tales*, *Paradise Lost* and *Rasselas;* like Cowley, he preferred the company of books to that of his schoolfellows, and even his games were literary: *I drew my sports as much as possible out of books, playing at Trojan wars, chivalrous encounters with coal-staves, and even at religious mysteries.*[4] Sydney Smith was discovered by *a man of considerable eminence, reading Virgil under a tree, when all his schoolfellows were at play: 'clever boy! clever boy!'* said his eminence, giving the lad a shilling, '*that is how to conquer the world.*'[5] Shelley also preferred books to games; although at Eton he *neglected the rules of school-attendance, he translated half of Pliny's 'Natural History' into English*, and he adventured enthusiastically into the literature of *magic* and *witchcraft.*[6] Coleridge took little pleasure in boyish games when at school, *but read incessantly*. His aunt kept a small shop at Crediton, and there he read through the stock of

[1] *Life and Letters*. Trevelyan. i, 39. [2] *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Eleventh Ed. xxiii, 858. [3] *Leigh Hunt*. Monkhouse. 35. [4] 'My Books', *Essays*. [5] *Memoir*. Holland. i, 8. [6] *Life*. Hogg. London Lib. Ed. 33–5.

gilt-covered little books, and likewise all the uncovered tales of Tom Hickathrift, Jack the Giant-Killer, etc.; at the age of six he had read *Belisarius, Robinson Crusoe,* and *Philip Quarles,* and then he found the *Arabian Nights,* one tale of which (*that of a man who was compelled to seek for a pure virgin*) caused him to be so haunted with spectres whenever he was alone in the dark, that his father took the book and burnt it.[1]

Dr. Johnson could read at three: *when he was a child in petticoats,* his mother put the book of *Common Prayer* into his hands, and, pointing to the Collect for the day said: *Sam, you must get this by heart.* She then went upstairs, leaving him to study it, but before she had reached the second floor Sam followed her and *repeated it distinctly, though he could not have read it more than twice.*[2] He read so *very hard* in his youth that he claimed to have known as much at eighteen as he did at fifty-four. *As soon as the use of speech had prepared my infant reason for the admission of knowledge,* saith Gibbon, *I was taught the arts of reading, writing and arithmetic. So remote is the date, so vague is the memory of their origin in myself, that, were not the error corrected by analogy, I should be tempted to conceive them as innate;*[3] between the ages of nine and eleven he had mastered Pope's *Homer,* Dryden's *Virgil,* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* deriving more pleasure from this last than from the others, *especially in the fall of Phaethon, and the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses.*[4] Like him, Montaigne also was early impressed by Ovid: *The first taste or feeling I had of bookes, was of the pleasure I tooke in reading the fables of Ovid's 'Metamorphosies': for, being but seven or eight years old, I would steale and sequester myselfe from all other delights, only to reade them.*[5] Petrarch could enjoy the music of prose long before he could understand its meaning, when older boys were *yawning over Prosper and Aesop,* he says,[6] *I applied myself to the books of Cicero. I could understand nothing; simply the sweetness and harmony of the language enchained me, so that whatever else I heard or read sounded to me harsh and even discordant.*

[1] *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 11–12. [2] Boswell, *Life.* Ed. Hill. i, 40.
[3] *Memoirs.* Hill. 31. [4] *Ib.* 38–9. [5] *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. i, 217.
[6] Qt., *Francesco Petrarca.* Tatham. i, 96.

Kinglake tells in *Eothen* how his mother taught him in earliest childhood *to find a home in his saddle, and to love old Homer, and all that Homer sung*. He pored over the *Odyssey* as over a story-book, but the *Iliad, line by line*, he *clasped to his brain with reverence as well as with love*. He was told by the writer of the *Preface* in the *towering folio* that *the works of men's hands were folly and vanity, and would pass away like the dreams of a child, but that the kingdom of Homer would endure for ever and ever*. He assented with all his soul: *I read, and still read; I came to know Homer*.[1] When but eleven years old that sturdy reformer, William Cobbett, attracted by the title of *The Tale of a Tub*, displayed in a shop window at Richmond, bought it in place of his supper for threepence, his whole fortune: *so impatient was I to examine it*, he tells, *that I got over into a field at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, and sat down to read, on the shady side of a haystack . . . I read on till it was dark without any thought of supper or bed. When I could see no longer, I put it into my pocket, and fell asleep beside the stack, till the birds awakened me in the morning; and then I started off, still reading my little book. I could relish nothing beside; I carried it about with me whereever I went, till, when about twenty years old, I lost it in a box that fell overboard in the Bay of Fundy*.[2]

Herbert Spencer was prompted to read by *Sandford and Merton*, but he learned to read late in boyhood;[3] so also Mark Pattison, who consistently forgot what he read until his youth was ended; his early passion was for natural history, and *Gilbert White* his favourite; but by the time he entered *Oxford* at nineteen he *had read Sallust through, about a dozen speeches of Cicero, twenty books of Livy, Virgil through, Horace through, Juvenal through, Persius through, Caesar through, Terence through: in Greek, the Gospels and Acts, Xenophon's 'Anabasis', Herodotus, Thucydides, some six or seven Orations of Demosthenes, Homer's 'Iliad', Pindar, Sophocles, Aeschylus, Porson's four plays of Euripides, seven plays of Aristophanes—all these*, he says, *not in scraps, but through*.[4] *Don Quixote* was the first book read by Heinrich Heine when he was only *in some*

[1] *Eothen*. iv. [2] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anthology*. 184. [3] *Autobiography*. i, 77. [4] *Memoirs*. 62.

measure acquainted with the alphabet;[1] there is no record of early or unusual reading on the part of Tolstoy, but up to the age of fourteen he had been *influenced* by the story of *Joseph* from the *Bible*, the 'Forty Thieves' and 'Prince Kamaral-zaman' from the *Arabian Nights*, Poushkin's *Tales* and his poem *Napoleon*, and Pogorèlsky's *Black Hen*.[2] Benjamin Disraeli, who claimed to have been *born in a library*, was an early and swift reader; when he had a new book at school, he shared it with his friend, Jones, and they read together; but Jones was still in the middle of the page when Ben had run through it. He had read so much and heard so much talk of books from his father, that no difficulties held him up. Little Jones would sigh at this, says Maurois, and guessing his distress, Benjamin smiled and said with great kindness: *I can wait*.[3] When Napoleon had forced Blucher to retreat near Briauncy, he recognized a tree near by under which he had sat as a boy of twelve reading *Tasso*.[4] I could continue these instances *ad infinitum* almost, but since it is necessary to stop somewhere, lest we should run to infinity, it is best to stop where, as in this instance, the theme is sufficiently expounded, and the contention which I began with, namely, that great readers show by the early symptoms of their capacity, that they are born not made, is proved.

VII. READERS WHO NEVER WEARY

Every historian of bookmen has examples of tireless readers, and in this section I will briefly speak of some which may be worthily reckoned amongst those already given in my preceding chapters. Benjamin Robert Haydon *read seventeen hours a day at 'Clarissa';*[5] John Addington Symonds, in a brief space, consumed 20,000 *odd lines of golden Ariosto, Tasso, Dante, Tassoni, and more modern singers;*[6] Samuel Johnson read in Boswell's *Journal* of their *Tour in the Hebrides* and wished it

[1] *Memoirs*. Ed. Karpeles. i, 58. [2] *Life*. Maude. i, 31. [3] *Disraeli*. ii, 10. [4] Ludwig, *Napoleon*. 457. [5] *Autobiography*. i, 223. [6] *Biography*. H. F. Brown. 268.

twice as long;[1] John Keats found Charles Wentworth Dilke *up to his ears in Walpole's letters;*[2] Henry Crabb Robinson[3] acclaims Carlyle's French Revolution: *a history in flashes of lightning*, to be taken only in small doses and not too frequently, a book to buy, to muse over and spell, rather than to be read through; which bears out what Thomas Carlyle himself records of a Rev. Alexander Scott who had *read the French Revolution over four times, every word of it!*[4] Lord Chesterfield implores his son to *read frequently, with the utmost attention, nay get by heart* that incomparable chapter in Cicero's *Offices* upon *Decorum;*[5] the Duke of Wellington, according to Benjamin Disraeli,[6] never reads anything but the *Commentaries* of Caesar; and a hundred years earlier Thomas Hearne,[7] Bodley's librarian, laments that *nothing is now hardly read but Burnet's romance or libel, call'd, 'The History of his Own Times'. 'Tis read by men, women and children. Indeed it is the common table-book for ladies as well as gentlemen, such as are friends to the revolution scheme.*

Most agree that books worth reading are worth reading more than once: *Repetitio est mater studiorum. Any book that is at all important*, says Schopenhauer, *ought to be at once read through twice;* partly because on a second reading the connection of its parts will be better understood, and *partly because we are not in the same temper and disposition on both readings.*[8] *Every good book*, says another,[9] *is worth reading three times at least*, and Benjamin Jowett held that all sensible persons were in the habit of reading *Pickwick Papers* at least twice a year. There is record also of a society *for which a twenty-fifth reading of 'Esmond' was the necessary qualification of membership.*[10] Gibbon when a young man was a tireless reader of a great variety of books; he *indulged* himself *in a second and even a third perusal of Terence, Virgil, Horace, Tacitus*, etc., and later in life he read the *Provincial Letters* of Pascal *almost every year*

[1] Boswell, *Life*. Ed. Hill. v, 307. [2] *Letters*. Ed. Forman. (1895.) 258. [3] *Diary*. ii, 216. [4] *New Letters*. i, 109. [5] Scoones, *Four Centuries of English Letters*. 224. [6] *Correspondence with his Sister*. 27. [7] *Remains*. Bliss. iii, 125. [8] *Art of Literature*. Trans. Saunders. 83. [9] Charles Bray. Qt., *In Praise of Books*. Swan. 13. [10] *The Times*. 27.xii.1928.

with new pleasure.[1] Ford Madox Brown gave Anne Gilchrist a copy of Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* and she told W. M. Rossetti (the editor of the volume) that she could read no other book: *it holds me entirely spellbound, and I go through it again and again with deepening delight and wonder*.[2] Madame de Maintenon asks Mlle. de L'Enclos to send her compliments to M. de la Rochefoucauld, and to tell him that the Book of *Job* and the Book of *Maxims* are the only things she ever reads;[3] Madame de Sévigné read *Corneille* again and again;[4] the Prince Regent was one of the earliest admirers of Jane Austen's novels, *he read them often, and kept a set in every one of his residences;*[5] Miss Collier and other friends of Samuel Richardson were so enamoured of that author's novels that they despised all others, and she herself read *Clarissa* four times, once aloud to her parents.[6]

Macaulay was never tired of *Gil Blas*,[7] and Birkbeck Hill wished neither it nor *Robinson Crusoe* would ever come to an end; he did not know how many times he had read *Gil Blas* and *always with delight*,[8] and when *Maud* was first published it was always with him: *either in my hand or pocket or by me at night;*[9] Anthony Trollope wonders *how many dozen times* he had read *The Prairie* by Fenimore Cooper;[10] Edward FitzGerald read his old favourites *over and over again*,[11] and he was inseparable from *Don Quixote* and the works of George Crabbe, whom he cut and concentrated in choice excerpts for the delectation of himself and his friends; *I have been reading slowly Don Quixote*, so Dr. John Brown in a letter to Coventry Dick,[12] *I don't think that I ever enjoyed anything more; do read it and write me four sonnets upon it;* Lord Rosebery knew Jane Austen *by heart*, and *he read all Scott's novels every year;*[13] Henry Jackson could not remember how many times he had read the

[1] *Memoirs*. Hill. 93, 97. [2] A. Gilchrist, *Life and Writings*. 177. [3] *Letters of Mme. de Maintenon, etc*. Eng. Ed. (1753.) 27. [4] *Letters*. i, 158. [5] *Memoir of Jane Austen*. Austen-Leigh. 118. [6] Barbauld, *Correspondence of Richardson*. ii, 89. [7] *Life and Letters*. Trevelyan. ii, 44. [8] G. B. Hill, *Letters*. 256–7. [9] *Ib*. 58. [10] *Autobiography*. World's Classics. 14. [11] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 130. [12] *Letters*. Nelson Ed. 108. [13] An Old Friend, *Sunday Times*. 26.v.1929.

tales of Gaboriau, and he read the *Meno* of Plato thrice, the *Euthyphro* five times, and the *Laches* more times than he could say, in fifteen years.[1]

Oscar Wilde called Pater's *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* his *Golden Book; I never travel anywhere without it*, he said;[2] William Cory never wearied of *Jane Eyre* and he records[3] that he read it *straight through at a sitting* on two occasions, once in his *home drawing-room* and again on the rocks at Bude; R. L. Stevenson complained that he could not get enough *Sagas*, he wished *there were nine thousand* of them;[4] he read *'Boswell' daily by way of a Bible; I mean to read 'Boswell' now*, he said, *until the day I die;*[5] and we have it on the authority of John Chamberlain, that when Lord Chancellor Bacon sent his *Instauratio Magna* to King James I, *he wisht his majestie might be as long in reading it as he hath been in compiling it*, which was well near thirteen years;[6] James Boswell records[7] that *the learned Cunninghame*, critic upon Horace, *read Homer and Ariosto through every year;* W. C. Hazlitt never *waxed tired* of *conning over* Bayle St. John's *Montaigne the Essayist*, Thoreau's *Walden*, Howell's *Venetian Life* or *Italian Journeys*. *Cuique suum:* there are those, he says,[8] *who never let the sun set without dipping into Burton's 'Anatomy of Melancholy', or who have some pet volume with which they renew their intimacy every year, as Francis Douce did with 'Reynard the Fox'*.

Isaac D'Israeli gives out of *Maurice*, that Sir William Jones *invariably read through every year the works of Cicero*, and that *the famous Bourdaloue reperused* every year, not only *Cicero*, but *St. Paul* and *St. Chrysostom* as well; if, Burton comments, Bourdaloue began at the age of twenty-two and continued until his death, fifty years later, *he must have done it over fifty times: the tortures of the classic Hades, and the disgusting inflictions courted by the anchorites of old, and the Brahmins of later times*, saith mine author, *do not approach the horrors of such an act of self-torture;*[9] but he speaks for himself, the good Bour-

[1] *Henry Jackson, O.M., A Memoir.* Parry. 173–95. [2] W. B. Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil.* 20. [3] *Letters and Journals.* 188. [4] *Letters.* ii, 255. [5] *Ib.* i, 116. [6] *A Jacobean Letter-Writer.* 187. [7] *Tour.* Hill. v, 373. [8] *Book-Collector.* 100. [9] *Book-Hunter.* 112.

daloue doubtless enjoyed his task, even if it was a penance. Lord Chatham read his folio *Bailey's Dictionary* twice;[1] Robert Louis Stevenson read *The Egoist* five or six times and meant to read it again;[2] Samuel Rogers read Marivaux's *Vie de Marianne* through six times;[3] and Edward FitzGerald read *Clarissa Harlowe* for the fifth time at the age of fifty-four.[4]

Coleridge argued[5] that there were few books which might be read *repeatedly at different times*, but among them he upheld the *Pilgrim's Progress*, which he read many times, *each time with a new different pleasure:* once as a *theologian*, once with *devotional feelings*, and once as a *poet*. Dibdin read Hume's *Reign of Elizabeth four times at the least*,[6] and he records that T. de Ocheda, an Italian scholar whom he met in Lord Spencer's Library, at Althorp, had read the *Fathers* through twice.[7] Mark Pattison[8] when a youth read Gilbert White's '*Natural History of Selborne*' *over and over* until he *knew it by heart*, and later on he read Gibbon's *Autobiography* until he could *repeat whole paragraphs*. No use to argue, then, whether there are few or many books worth repeated reading, since repetitive reading has been a habit in all times, and sometimes so persistent that books have been worn out in the process. Some such fear may have been in the mind of John Price, Bodley's librarian, in the reign of King George III, who encouraged a reader to keep Cook's *Voyages* (which had been given by the King to the *Rector* of Lincoln), telling him that the longer he kept it the better it would be, for if the book *was known to be in the library he should be perpetually plagued with enquiries after it*.[9]

Whether this repeated reading is good or bad taxeth opinion; still, where it gives pleasure, it may be accounted a good and sole justification, as when John Stuart Mill read Pope's *Homer* through *twenty or thirty times*,[10] Taine, the *Chartreuse de Parme* of Stendhal, and Dr. Arnold (of Rugby), *Humphrey*

[1] Timbs, *Anecdotal Biography*. 7. [2] 'The Influence of Books', *Art of Writing*. 87. [3] Dobson, *De Libris*. 142. [4] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 393. [5] *Table-Talk*. 89. [6] *Reminiscences*. i, 90. [7] *Ib*. ii, 593. [8] *Memoirs*. 33, 129–30. [9] Macray, *Annals of the Bodleian*. 207. [10] J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*. 10.

Clinker, each fifty times;[1] but it is less justifiable as a means of inculcating knowledge or understanding, as Laurence Sterne hinted,[2] when he recorded that Avicenna and Licetus read Aristotle's *Metaphysics forty times through apiece, and never understood a single word.* Whether this be wise or not, most will support them that advertise the advantages of reading over many times the great unfathomable masterpieces of literature, as *Homer*, at *the fiftieth reading* of whom, in Harrison's estimation,[3] *one never wearies, just as one can listen to Beethoven, or watch the sunrise or the sunset day by day with new delight;* he himself could read the *Antiquary*, *Bride of Lammermoor*, *Ivanhoe*, *Quentin Durward*, and *Old Mortality*, *at least once a year. A man*, he holds, *can hardly be said to know the 12th Mass or the 9th Symphony, by virtue of having once heard them played ten years ago; he can hardly be said to take air and exercise because he took a country walk once last Autumn. And so*, he argues, *he can hardly be said to know Scott or Shakespeare, Molière or Cervantes, when he once read them since the close of his schooldays, or amidst the daily grind of his professional life. The immortal and universal poets of our race*, he concludes, *are to be read and re-read till their music and their spirit are a part of our nature; they are to be thought over and digested till we live in the world they created for us.*[4]

VIII. SINGLE BOOK DEVOTEES

So, too, there are readers who find a library in a single book. They are sometimes suspect: *and it is most true which Seneca hath, as well in reading as eating, in books as dyet, varietas delectat, certitudo prodest, variety is delightful, but certainty more usefull and profitable.*[5] Joubert gives reasons for this when he says that *books which absorb our attention to such an extent that they rob us of all fancy for other books are absolutely pernicious*, because *they only bring fresh crotchets and sects into the world.*[6] *The 'homo unius libri' is proverbially formidable in all conversational*

[1] Dobson, *Bookman's Budget*. 16. [2] *Tristram Shandy*. iv, 10. [3] Frederic Harrison, *Choice of Books*. 71. [4] *Ib*. 78. [5] George Hakewill, *Apologie*. (1630.) 229. [6] *Selected Thoughts*. Trans. Matthew Arnold. 178.

figurantes.[1] *Woe to him that reads but one book,*[2] quotes George Herbert, yet for himself,

> Not a word or look
> I affect to own,
> But by book,
> And Thy book alone.[3]

Dr. Johnson saw the poet William Collins in his poor lodgings at Islington with a *New Testament* in his hand: *I have but one book,* he said, *but it is the best.*[4] When St. Thomas Aquinas was asked in what manner a man might become learned, he replied: *by reading one book,* meaning the *Bible;* when Sir Walter Scott was near his end he asked Lockhart to take him into the library at Abbotsford and place him near the window so that he might look once more upon the Tweed, and this being done he asked Lockhart to read to him, and when asked what book, he said: *Need you ask? There is but one.*[5] *It is our duty to live among books,* said John Henry Newman, *especially to live by one book, and a very old one;*[6] Hyperius holds that by means of this book *the mind is erected from all worldly cares, and hath much quiet and tranquillity;* for, as Austin hath it, it is *scientia scientiarum, omni melle dulcior, omni pane suavior, omni veno hilarior:* the supreme knowledge: sweeter than all honey, pleasanter than all bread, more cheering than all wine; *for neither,* as Chrysostom well adds, *those boughs and leaves of trees which are plashed for cattle to stand under, in the heat of the day, in summer, so much refresh them with their acceptable shade, as the reading of the Scriptures doth recreate and comfort a distressed soul, in sorrow and affliction;* no songs, for Milton, *comparable to the songs of Sion; no orations equal to those of the Prophets;* and for Coleridge, *Homer* and *Virgil* are *disgustingly* tame and *Milton scarcely tolerable* after *Isaiah* or St. Paul's *Epistle to the Hebrews,* though neither he nor Milton was *homo unius libri;* but *non nostrum tantas componere lites,* as Sir W. Waller,[7] who adventured among many books but ever came

[1] Southey, *The Doctor.* 164. [2] *Jacula Prudentum.* [3] 'Discipline.' [4] *Lives of the Poets.* (1781.) iv, 329. [5] *Life of Scott.* Lockhart. [6] *Tracts for the Times.* [7] *Divine Meditations.*

back to his *Bible: Write Thy law in my heart*, he prayed, *and I shall become the best book here.*

In the opposite extreme are those who attach themselves to a given book from among the infinite variety of general writings:

> Variety I ask not: give me one
> To live perpetually upon.[1]

Among profane or secular adherents there are enthusiasts like Parson Adams, in *Joseph Andrews*, who read only in a copy of *Aeschylus*, and Boffin, in *Our Mutual Friend*, who doted on Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire;* these two may be taken as indicative of the rest, and that their concentration is justified will be amply shown both here and in that section where I recall many instances of readers who, without confining themselves to one book, return to their favourites again and again with cumulative delight, as Hilaire Belloc, in our own time, finds no book so readable as *Gibbon;* he can *pick him up at any moment*, open where he will, *read him for ten minutes or half an hour or half a day, and lay him down delighted;* not a *dull line in the enormous work, certainly not a dull page;* and one can take it up *at any period of one's life and so delight in it;* he himself has read *Gibbon* in this fashion for thirty-five years; *you can go back to him as often as you like*, read the same passage *over and over again, each time within a few days of the last*, and suffer no more fatigue than you suffer from *the prospect of a familiar and satisfying landscape;*[2] so great a devotion might have marked him out for a one-book-man, and thus observing him I may say there but for the grace of God goes Boffin; but 'tis a miracle of books as of all masterpieces of art, that no familiarity can *stale their infinite variety*, for like the *happy melodist* in the poet[3] they are, in their separate and individual entities

> For ever piping songs for ever new.

Malherbe, *the father of French poetry*, had for sole favourite *Horace*, whom he called his *breviary; Horace* was his com-

[1] Cowley, 'Manna'. [2] 'Gibbon', *New Statesman*. 18.ii.1928. [3] Keats, 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'.

panion when out walking, and he laid him on his pillow at night;[1] Keats was *very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare* was *enough for us;* he thought he would *never read any other Book much;*[2] and the Duke of Buckingham would have only *Homer:*

> Read Homer once, and you can read no more;
> For all books else appear so mean, so poor:
> Verse will seem prose, but still persist to read,
> And Homer will be all the books you need.[3]

Legend no less than history has records of such-like concentrate readers; as that one from whom Merlin got his magic book:

> little glassy-headed hairless man,
> Who lived alone in a great wild on grass;
> Read but one book, and ever reading grew
> So grated down and filed away with thought,
> So lean his eyes were monstrous.[4]

Dibdin tells[5] of a man *who declared that there were only two books in the world: the 'Bible' and 'Euclid'*, and, adds mine author, he *was not so far out of the way as would at first seem;* William Roberts[6] notes several *who appear, for the most part, to have made a constant companion* of some particular book, or who have favoured some single class of books: St. Jerome slept with a copy of Aristotle under his pillow; *Lord Clarendon had a couple of favourites, Livy and Tacitus; Lord Chatham had a good classical library, with an especial fondness for Barrow; Kant who never left his birthplace, Königsberg, had a weakness* for *books of travel*, and *Sir William Jones loved his Caesar*. Of this kind, too, was the Earl of Lonsdale, who told John Wilson Croker that he was *a worshipper of Arthur Young's;* he sang his praises, as though he were a God, and thought him *the most truthful writer and fuller of information upon any subject than any other author. In his* 150 *volumes that he wrote and edited, like*

[1] J. Roger Lees, *Diversions of a Bookworm*. 243. [2] *Letters*. Ed. Forman. (1895.) 19. [3] These lines, according to Beloe (Anecdotes, i, 103), are inscribed in a copy of the Turnebus Homer in the Cracherode Col. [4] Tennyson, 'Merlin and Vivien', *Idylls of the King*. [5] *Reminiscences*. ii, 890. [6] *Book-Hunter in London*. xv–xvi.

Shakespeare and 'another book' [the *Bible*, peradventure], *you find everything, or something* à propos *to every subject.*[1] This Earl kept duplicate copies of Young's works at his Town mansion in London and at Lowther Castle, and odd copies at his places at Barnes and Whitehaven, so that he could always practise his bibliolatry.

Tristram Shandy gives out in his *Life and Opinions*,[2] if you will permit this further piece of evidence from fiction, that his father was a most notable instance of the one-book-enthusiast, his anchorage being Slawkenbergius on *Noses; every page of him was a rich treasure of inexhaustible knowledge to my father;—he could not open him amiss; and he would often say, in closing the book: That if all the arts and sciences in the world, with the books which treated of them, were lost,—should the wisdom and policies of governments, he would say, through disuse, ever happen to be forgot; and all that statesmen had wrote or caused to be written upon the strong or the weak sides of courts and kingdoms, should they be forgot also,—and Slawkenbergius only left,—there would be enough in him in all conscience, he would say, to set the world agoing again.* Well may he treasure this *institute of all that was necessary on noses, and everything else;* he was inseparable from that notable work, *at matin, noon and vespers was Hafen Slawkenbergius his recreation and delight;* 'twas ever in his hands, and *so worn, so glazed, so contrited and attrited was it with fingers and with thumbs in all its parts, from one end even unto the other,* that you would have sworn it had been a *canon's prayer-book.*

It will be seen from these examples that any single book may serve the end of a whole library for those who are disposed by nature to one book, and, in final proof, I may yet cite the instance of Sir Walter Elliot, of Kellynch Hall, in Somersetshire, as a man who, *for his own amusement, never took up any book but the Baronetage; there he found occupation for an idle hour, and consolation in a distressed one; there his faculties were roused into admiration and respect, by contemplating the limited remnants of the earliest patents; there any unwelcome sensation, arising from domestic affairs, changed naturally into pity and contempt, as he turned over the almost endless creations of the last*

[1] *The Croker Papers.* iii, 201–2. [2] Sterne, *Tristram Shandy.* iii, 42.

century; and there, if every other leaf were powerless, he could read his own history with an interest that never failed.[1]

IX. READING MANY BOOKS AT ONCE

Resembling these readers who focus their attention upon particular works, are others who revel in many books at one time, flitting from one to another as bees or butterflies from flower to flower, pollen gatherers these, honey-makers, dippers: and they are augmented by Robert Southey, who frankly advised those who seek knowledge *to have two or three books in course of reading at the same time*,[2] which the learned Elizabeth Carter would have upheld at special moments, such as that recorded by her[3] when, *overcome* by *a solitude in London . . . where there is not so much as a view of the sun, moon, and stars to entertain one*, she avoids the vapours by hedging herself in with *all manner of books, drawings, work-bags, and authors in all languages*, reading only the prefaces of some books and the conclusions of others. This is, perhaps, more to be encouraged than the habit of a Chinese scholar, Chia Shan, who in the second century before Christ, scampered over books *as a huntsman over the fields,—all breadth, and no depth*,[4] or Denis, in *Crome Yellow*[5] (p. 35), who in five years read twenty or thirty tons of *great thick books about the universe and the mind and ethics*, or Dr. William King, author of *The Art of Cookery*, who entered Christ's College in 1681, at the age of eighteen, and *prosecuted his studies with so much intenseness* that he was 8 *years standing*, and in that period read over and remarked upon *twenty-two thousand odd hundred books and manuscripts;*[6] or Shelley, who employed two-thirds of every day in reading; *it is no exaggeration*, Hogg affirms, *that out of the twenty-four hours, he frequently read sixteen.*[7]

Some read through a whole continent of books, giving their passion leave to rove from one book to all the books of a

[1] Jane Austen, *Persuasion*. i. [2] *Letters*. To Henry Taylor. [3] *Letters*. Pennington. i, 226. [4] *Chinese Biog. Dict*. Giles. 129. [5] By Aldous Huxley. [6] Johnson, *Lives of the Poets*. ii, 271. [7] Hogg, *Shelley*. London Lib. Ed. 84.

single author and all the books derived from them by a process of expansion similar, in its own realm, to that adopted by the extra-illustrator in his; others adventure freely among all the books in one definite class or upon one subject. Such readers have devoted whole lives to Shakespeare, Homer, Dante, who are continents in themselves; but lesser realms will suffice. Lionel Johnson, whose reading was as vast as it was varied, contracted an inordinate passion for *Newman* and revelled in the thirty-six volumes of that writer, *from the most splendid and familiar passage down to the slightest and most occasional note;* until he became better acquainted with him than with any *literature or language*.[1] The American scholar, Dr. Schelling, boasted of having read *every old play in our literature;*[2] and S. R. Gardiner, the historian of the Civil War, spent all his spare time in the British Museum Reading-room for nearly fifty years, and took in the stride of his vast reading *all the* 23,000 *tracts in the Thomason collection*.[3] Charles James Fox, says Lord Rosebery,[4] preferred *Homer*, but he would also read *all the novels he could get hold of. In conversation he would range over almost the whole field of literature with zest and passion, without apparently once straying into politics. A friend tells how in a day he would discuss Homer and Virgil, Aeschylus and Euripides, Milton and Massinger, Pope and Addison, Gibbon and Blackstone, Sophocles and Shakespeare, Metastasio, Congreve, Vanbrugh, Cowper, Fielding and Burns;* and there was a time

> When Gladstone, bluest of the blue,
> Read all Augustine's folios through.[5]

X. PREFERENCES NO BAR TO FURTHER ADVENTURES

To return again from this digression to a further account of my repetitious adventurers, I must crave leave to add a few more examples, to prove that the traversing of a particular

[1] *Post Liminium*. 303. [2] Newton, *A Magnificent Farce*. 62. [3] G. F. Barwick, *Reading-room of the British Museum*. 113. [4] *Appreciations and Addresses*. 157–8. [5] William Cory, *Ionica*. 'Hersilia.' Third Ed. 193.

realm of letters many times is no objection to frequent excursions elsewhere; determined readers are as happy when they rove in search of fresh pastures as when they browse in those that are familiar; and those who chew the cud of a single book are kin to those others who are forever sampling new nourishment. Most persistent and notable among them was Macaulay, who seemed to Henry Jackson, *not historian, nor orator, nor politician, but the book-lover*,[1] and as such to be respected; and Macaulay confesses himself a bibliophile first and last in every page of his life, and not least by his devotion to favourite books: *I have no pleasure from books*, he says, *which equals that of reading over for the hundredth time great productions which I almost know by heart;*[2] and he gave proof of this insatiable appetite in many a confession to his friends. He would read through the Greek dramatists from end to end every year;[3] when writing his own *History of England*, he twice read through most of the works of Burke,[4] thinking them *admirable*, and Burke *the greatest man since Milton*.

In the early days of his stay in India he read almost continuously with a frenzied appetite for big and little masterpieces. Casting up his *reading account* from the time he unpacked his books in Calcutta, at the end of November, 1834, to December 30, 1835, he tells Ellis (in a letter)[5] that he read *Aeschylus*, *Sophocles*, *Pindar*, *Plautus*, *Theocritus*, *Terence*, and *Lucretius*, twice each; and in addition: *Herodotus*, *Thucydides*, *Euripides*, *Callimachus*, *Apollonius Rhodius*, *Quintus Calaber; almost all Xenophon's works, almost all Plato; Aristotle's 'Politics', and a good deal of his 'Organum', besides dipping elsewhere in him; the whole of Plutarch's 'Lives'; about half of Lucian; two or three books of Athenaeus; Catullus*, *Tibullus*, *Propertius*, *Lucan*, *Statius*, *Silius Italicus*, *Livy*, *Velleius Paterculus*, *Sallust*, *Caesar*, and he was then nearly through *Cicero* and at the same time deep in *Aristophanes* and *Lucian*, and full of shame that he had not read Lucian's *Dialogues of the Dead* since he was thirteen years of age. Five months later he gives a further account[6] to the same friend showing that bookish

[1] *Henry Jackson, O.M., A Memoir*. Parry. 132. [2] *Life*. Trevelyan. ii, 23. [3] *Ib*. ii, 420. [4] *Ib*. ii, 318. [5] *Ib*. ii, 318. [6] *Ib*. i, 389–90.

appetite is stimulated by what it devours. Since Christmas he had read *Aristophanes* twice through, and once again *Herodotus* and *Thucydides;* then he turned to the Latin writers, *Cicero* and the two *Senecas*, father and son, and *several third-rate and fourth-rate writers, as one does read such stuff: Valerius Maximus, Annaeus Florus, Lucius Ampelius*, and *Aurelius Victor. I have also gone through Phaedrus.* But he is *now better employed* deep in Tacitus his *Annals*, and *at the same time* (so he saith) *Suetonius;* all of which is but an account of his reading over a certain time, but all times were the same, differing only in the energy with which he pursued his passion. He read during all waking hours; how else could he have devoured so much? *Plautus* six times in twenty-four years,[1] and so on; but the tale of his reading is too long; *sufficit.*

Such multiple reading is a test of the quality of a book, as Miss Catherine Talbot well knew when lamenting to Mrs. Elizabeth Carter the scarcity of new books, *not a new book has shewed its head this century* (the eighteenth century was then forty-five years of age); but she had little cause for complaint, for there was *full as much pleasure in reading a very excellent book the fifth or sixth time, as if one had it fresh from the press;* curiosity at first is too eager, leisure is needed to dwell upon its beauties, and when one has *a general idea of the whole one can stop at what particular part one pleases*, which is true, but there is another kind of pleasure: *in life one is unwilling to part with an agreeable moment because one knows it will never come again*, but it is otherwise with books: *by turning back to a full passage* one may recall the pleasure of the first moment at will.[2]

Because of this humour to turn back, dip into the past, many good bookmen are full of regrets, knowing as they do that opportunity to repeat old bookish adventures rarely comes. *Ah! the books that one will never read again*, sighs George Gissing:[3] *they gave delight, perchance something more; they left a perfume in the memory; but life has passed them by forever.* He has but to muse when one after another past adventures rise

[1] *Ib.* i, 409. [2] *Letters.* Pennington. i, 84. [3] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 145.

before him in a ghostly fantasy: *books gentle and quieting; books noble and inspiring; books that well merit to be pored over, not once but many a time.* Never to read them again, the years pass too quickly, and are too few, and he dreams that when he awaits the end *those lost books* may perchance *come wandering into his thought* and he will remember them as friends are remembered. This nostalgia for old favourites is an effect of the literary *wanderlust*, the desire to roam over too wide an area of books, and for those who suffer from it the best remedy is concentration, to find comfort with a few tried companions, as Coventry Patmore, who *limited* his reading *almost wholly to the few great books from which the world derives all its knowledge.*[1]

Friedrich Nietzsche was a purposeful reader, inasmuch as books, with music, were the raw materials of his deductions. He believed only in French culture, and it is *to a small number of old French authors* that he returns *again and again. I almost always take refuge in the same books*, he says: *altogether their number is small; they are the books which are precisely my proper fare.* It is not in his *nature to read much, and of all sorts:* a library makes him ill. His old French books were, *Montaigne*, *Pascal*, *Molière*, *Corneille* and *Racine*. Among the moderns he is particularly fond of Guy de Maupassant, and confessed, *between ourselves*, that he preferred the generation of Paul Bourget, Pierre Loti, Gyp, Meilhac, Anatole France and Jules Lemaitre *to its masters, all of whom were corrupted by German philosophy.*[2]

None among great readers has enjoyed more deliberately the *linked sweetness long drawn out* of our more spacious writers, those long, leisurely books which rove and meander, saunter and lounge through their lives in an eternity of their own, than Mark Rutherford. Familiarity with those old books breeds affection for them, not contempt. He loved the *slow pages*[3] of the *Spectators* of Addison and Steele, and the *slow walking pace* of *Clarissa, which allows us to see everything by the way, never hurrying past anything of interest, turning back to look at it again is delightful.*[4] He read through the *Bible* once in

[1] *Memoirs.* Champneys. ii, 105. [2] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo.* Trans. Ludovici. 37–8. [3] *Letters to Three Friends.* 256. [4] *Ib.* 95–6.

every two or three years, *an hour daily before breakfast*, and found it *profitable beyond almost any other book*;[1] and Wesley's *Journal*, Carlyle's *Frederick the Great*, Spenser's *Faerie Queene*, Doughty's *Dawn in Britain* and *Arabia Deserta*. *Frederick* was for him *the great modern epic*,[2] and he read him more than once; so too the *Faerie Queene*, which on re-reading he was *prepared more eagerly than ever to champion it against all fools;* Doughty's *Dawn in Britain*, despite its six volumes of blank verse, *did not for a minute* tire him;[3] Boswell's *Life of Johnson* and his *Tour in the Hebrides* made him wonder why he should ever read a new book; such works have the peculiar merit of being inexhaustible; *each successive reading, if you repeat the first twenty times, will be profitable;*[4] which many another confirms, as Benjamin Robert Haydon nearly one hundred years earlier: *no resisting* Boswell's *Life;*[5] and to conclude this matter Mark Rutherford, letting us into his secret of slow reading and long-drawn familiarity, confesses that he goes over the old books, *Bacon*, *Shakespeare*, *Milton*, and those others, *again and again*, because he is gotten into their ways, *become tuned to them*, responding to them as to the known, tried, approved; the new is foreign; it has no roots and may be forgotten tomorrow: in the reading of it, therefore, there is no profit.[6] He is no mere *passéist* seeking the antique on principle; he could appreciate the new, as when he announced to Philip Webb, in a burst of praise, that he had read J. M. Synge's *Aran Islands* twice and *must read it again;* it held him, clutched him, would not let him go, and, recalling the tragedy of the author's early death, he took comfort from the thought that, dying young, Synge was saved from becoming literary;[7] but the reasons of such devotion are not to my present purpose.

XI. IN THE GARDEN OF EPICURUS

If less esteemed by the more serious of students, not less wise are those others for whom books are toys of leisure, pleasant companions, retreats from boredom, arbours of content,

[1] *Ib.* 92–4. [2] *Ib.* 66–7. [3] *Ib.* 295. [4] *Ib.* 373. [5] *Autobiography*. i, 97. [6] Rutherford, *Op. cit.* 194–5. [7] *Ib.* 393.

feasts of fancy, cosy corners, *Pills to Purge Melancholy*, hones for the wit, memorisers, *magic casements*, tickle-palates, pastimes, *sanctuaries*, sedatives, palliatives, *panis et circenses* for the rebellious soul, etc., as Thomas Gray, who wished ever to be lying on sofas reading *eternal new novels by Crébillon and Marivaux*.[1] Such are condemned by high-brows, and the strenuously purposeful folk who would have us always bargaining with God, life or destiny for, in the common saying, *services rendered*, as Frederic Harrison,[2] who condemns for *literary dandyism* all *pursuit of letters without social purpose or any systematic faith*, and derides the use of books as *sedatives*, or as the *means of exciting a mild intellectual titillation;* he is all for *bracing the mind to think*, and not without good reasons, even if, in the meantime, he protests too much.

There is a medium, even among books, a time for play as well as work, for relaxation as well as strenuousness: thinkest *because thou art* cultured, *there shall be no more cakes and ale?* 'Tis as good sometimes to loaf with books as to labour with them, to *damn braces* and *bless relaxes*, as Blake advises.[3] Cicero, as I remember, in an epistle to his dear friend Atticus, confessed that he was so in love with idleness during his retirement, that he could not tear himself from it, and books aided and abetted the mood: *Itaque aut libris me delecto, quorum habeo Anti festivam copiam*,[4] I enjoy myself with my books, of which I have a good company at Antium. *My interests*, Alexander Smith declared, *are divided between my geraniums and my books;*[5] and Edward FitzGerald shamelessly dawdled with books, *as ladies work: to pass the time away*[6]—the partner of his idleness, as like as not, his *complete Voltaire*.[7]

High amongst those who know how to relax stands our prince of dilettantes, Horace Walpole. He lived in *Epicurean ease*, and made reading one of the instruments of his cosiness, preserving his sensations, impressions, fancies, in nearly four thousand letters (*gossiping gazettes*, he called them) to his friends. Historian, gossip, printer, poet, antiquary, this vir-

[1] Leigh Hunt, 'My Books', *Essays*. [2] *Choice of Books*. 88. [3] *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. [4] *Ad Atticum*. Loeb Ed., 125. ii, 6. [5] *Dreamthorp*. 248. [6] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 49. [7] *Ib*. i, 238.

tuoso was as book-born as he was well-born, and he read for dalliance, to gratify his whim, his taste, or his malice. Reading was the final decoration to his days; he distilled his books into his life and his life into his books. When he was not peering at the world through the window of art, he was peeping at it through the keyhole of letters. The story of Phaeton in the *Metamorphoses* was a picture of his beloved Twickenham: *Ardet Athos, taurusque Cilix, etc.; mount Richmond burns, parched is Petersham; Parnassusque biceps, dry is Pope's grot, the nymphs of Cliveden are burning to blackmoors, their faces are already as glowing as a cinder, Cycnus is changed into a swan: quodque suo Tagus amne vehit, fluit ignibus aurum; my gold fishes are almost molten.*[1]

He enjoys life and laughs at it, and he is no miser of laughter: *I desire to die when I have nobody left to laugh with me*, he tells George Montague.[2] My dandy Democritus has never seen or heard any serious things that were not ridiculous: *Jesuits, Methodists, philosophers, politicians, the hypocrite Rousseau, the scoffer Voltaire, the encyclopedists, the Humes, the Lyttletons, the Grenvilles, the atheist tyrant of Prussia, and the mountebank of history, Mr. Pitt, all are to* him *but imposters in their various ways* —fame or interest their object; and he regards the ploughman who *reads his almanack, and believes the stars so many farthing candles*, as wiser and more rational and *honester than any of them. Oh!* he cries, *I am sick of visions and systems*, for he sees in them no more than an eternal recurrence of things that *shove one another aside* to reappear like *the figures in a moving picture*. As he sees more of the world Rabelais *brightens up* to him, teaching him to laugh at it all rather than hate it. And in that *Histoire Philosophique et Politique du Commerce des Deux Indes* writ by the Abbé Raynal, which the Parliament of Paris condemned to be burnt and its author imprisoned, he found a cosmography much to his liking. *It tells one everything in the world;—how to make conquests, invasions, blunders, settlements, bankruptcies, fortunes, etc.; tells you the natural and historical history of all nations; talks commerce, navigation, tea, coffee, china,*

[1] Walpole to George Montague, *Letters*. Cunningham. iv, 11. [2] *Ib.* iv, 441.

mines, salt, spices; of the Portuguese, English, French, Dutch, Danes, Spaniards, Arabs, caravans, Persians, Indians, of Louis XIV and the King of Prussia; of La Bourdonnais, Dupleix, and Admiral Saunders; of rice, and women that dance naked; of camels, ginghams, and muslin; of millions of millions of livres, pounds, rupees, and cowries; of iron cables and Circassian women; of Law and the Mississippi; and against all governments and religions; such a largesse in the first two volumes that he cannot conceive what is left for the four others: *all is so mixed, that you learn forty new trades, and fifty new histories, in the single chapter.*[1]

Walpole is sedentary, a stay-at-home; travels by the proxy of books; they are his magic carpets, they carry him to the ends of the earth: *I read nothing but American voyages and histories of plantations and settlements,* he tells Bentley;[2] but most he loves to read gossiping histories such as he himself would write, and, like all hedonistic readers, the *Letters* of Madame de Sévigné; *there is scarce a book in the world I love so much;*[3] and after Madame, the gallant Count Grammont: *I am Grammont mad,* he tells Montague.[4] *Oh, madam, madam, madam* (he is now addressing Lady Hervey), *what do you think I have found? I am out of my wits! Never was anything like my luck; it never forsakes me! I have found Count Grammont's picture! I believe I shall see company upon it, certainly keep the day holy.*[5] Montesquieu's *Letters* are so agreeable that he cannot *go to bed till he has finished them at nearly three in the morning;*[6] Fulke Greville's *Maxims and Characters* is *a wonderful book by a wonderful author;*[7] Lord Clarendon's *Life entertains him more* than any book he ever read;[8] Gibbon's *Rome* lifts him up:[9] *Lo, there is just appeared a truly classic work: a history, not majestic like Livy, nor compressed like Tacitus; not stamped with character like Clarendon; perhaps not so deep as Robertson's 'Scotland', but a thousand degrees above his 'Charles'; not pointed like Voltaire, but as accurate as he is inexact; modest as he is tranchant, and sly as Montesquieu without being so recherché;* the style is *smooth as a Flemish picture,* muscles concealed, not

[1] *Letters.* Cunningham. v, 421. [2] *Ib.* ii, 402. [3] *Ib.* ii, 181. [4] *Ib.* ii, 268. [5] *Ib.* iv, 442. [6] *Ib.* v, 52. [7] *Ib.* iii, 6. [8] *Ib.* iii, 273–4. [9] *Ib.* vi, 310–11.

exaggerated as in Michelangelo to exhibit the painter's skill in anatomy, *nor composed of the limbs of clowns of different nations, like Dr. Johnson's heterogeneous monsters.*

He sits up all night reading Lord Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*, and to his surprise finds them *really written from the heart, not for the honour of the author's head;* he thinks they do as little honour to the last as show feeling in the first: his lordship *was sensible what a cub he had to work on, and whom two quartos of licking could not mould, for cub he remained to his death.*[1] He sends Erasmus Darwin's *Botanic Garden* to Hannah More, extolling the author *a great poet* whose *powerful talent* has been wasted on descriptions in verse which have to be explained by essays in prose; belike she will be surprised at meeting *a Truffle converted into a Nymph . . . inhabiting a palace studded with emeralds and rubies like a saloon in the Arabian Nights.*[2] He revels in the *Lives of Leland, Tom Hearne, and Antony Wood*, and thinks it *the most delightful book in the world.*[3] He is no admirer of Richardson, who *wrote those deplorably tedious lamentations,* '*Clarissa*' and '*Sir Charles Grandison*', *pictures of high life as conceived by a Methodist teacher;*[4] '*Tristram Shandy*' is the *dregs of nonsense*[5] and *a very insipid and tedious performance;*[6] Boswell is a *jackanapes*,[7] his *Tour* a *most absurd enormous book . . . the story of a mountebank and his zany*,[8] and his *Life of Dr. Johnson* would be more readable *were it reduced from two volumes to one;* which censures few would support, but we have no cause to complain; *nowt so queer as folks*, as they say in my native Lancashire; nothing so amusing as opinions, and in the broad parterres of the garden of books there are blossoms and posies to suit all tastes, so for false fears, as all such objections must be, and all other inconveniences in this kind, not to get excited is best, but to be amused as he is when *Rousseau insists that the north and south blow at the same time.*[9] But I rove.

There are many more notable examples of readers who have fluttered from book to book as bees from flower to flower gathering honey, but, unlike the bees, for the pleasure

[1] *Letters.* Cunningham. vi, 74. [2] *Ib.* ix, 177. [3] *Ib.* v, 394. [4] *Ib.* iv, 305–6. [5] *Ib.* iii, 382. [6] *Ib.* iii, 298. [7] *Ib.* ix, 49. [8] *Ib.* ix, 24. [9] *Ib.* iv, 453.

of the taste rather than for sustenance, and of all the rest I admire most Edward FitzGerald, who lived for himself, possessed his soul, harmed no man, and died easily, bequeathing, by chance not design, the fragrant memory of a fastidious life among books and friends, and a set of verses, a bundle of letters and a dialogue, which will ever stand

Against the dark and Time's consuming rage.[1]

I am almost of opinion that he was incomparably beyond them all in his exquisite appreciation of books. He read like an artist, idled with genius, and found his *visionary inactivity* better than the *mischievous activity* of so many he saw about him, if not better than the *useful and virtuous activity of a few others.*[2]

Idleness was the art he professed, he was an amateur in everything else: *I have been all my life apprentice to this heavy business of idleness, and am not yet master of my craft; the Gods are too just to suffer that I should.*[3] *Here I live with tolerable content,* he relates, *perhaps with as much as most people arrive at, and what if one were grateful one would perhaps call perfect happiness. Here is a glorious sunshiny day: all the morning I read about Nero in Tacitus lying at full length on a bench in the garden: a nightingale singing, and some red anemones eyeing the sun manfully not far off. A funny mixture all this: Nero, and the delicacy of Spring; all very human, however. Then at half-past twelve lunch on Cambridge cream cheese: then a ride over hill and dale; then spudding up some weeds from the grass: and then coming in I sit down to write to you, my sister winding red worsted from the back of a chair, and the most delightful little girl in the world chattering incessantly. So runs the world away. You think I live in Epicurean ease; but this happens to be a jolly day; one isn't always well, or tolerably good, the weather is not always clear, nor nightingales singing, nor Tacitus full of pleasant atrocity. But such is life, I believe I have got hold of a good end of it.*[4] So he idles busily and reads for delight, *dolce far niente,* flying from the grossness and the slag of life as he flew from Carlyle's *raving book about*

[1] Daniel. [2] *Letters and Lit. Remains.* i, 202. [3] *More Letters.* 20. [4] *Letters and Lit. Remains.* i, 50.

heroes, taking refuge in the *Tale of a Tub* and *Tristram Shandy*, *Shakespeare*, and *Horace Walpole*, Burton's *Anatomy*, the *Letters* of Madame de Sévigné, *Voltaire* and *Cervantes*.

He roves over many pastures, sounds deep seas, takes pleasure even in what he does not *wholly understand, just as old women like sermons*, which is *of a piece with an admiration of all Nature around us;* so he is able to enjoy the charm in *the half meanings and glimpses of meaning that come in through Blake's wilder visions.*[1] His taste is catholic yet fastidious; he will look into any book, taste all with subtle and discriminating palate; any book is good that *notes down facts alone, especially about health;* he *wishes we had diaries of the lives of half the unknown men that have lived;*[2] he could not help *liking* even a *Cookery Book.*[3] He *sunned* himself with *Dickens*,[4] and made *a kind of Summer* in his room with *Boccaccio;*[5] W. F. Pollock tells him to read *Clarendon* and obediently he does so, liking him much: *delightful to read his manly, noble English after Lord Brougham's spick and span Birmingham ware in the 'Edinburgh';*[6] he is respectfully astonished at *Carlyle*, bored by *Browning*, contemptuous of *Mrs. Browning; George Eliot* he could not *relish at all;*[7] but he reads her and the rest of his antipathies for the pleasure of grumbling; dives with as cheerful a complaint into the *five thick volumes, five hundred pages apiece* of the *dull Letters* of Mrs. Delany,[8] as he basks appreciatively in the sun of *George Crabbe*. He toys with the magazines, flirts with novels from Mudie's, especially *A Woman in White*, and threatens to make readable *that aggravating Book, Clarissa Harlowe*, with a *pair of scissors;*[9] but when old age comes upon him he *recoils from making new Acquaintances in Novels*, and *retreats upon his Old Friends, in Shakespeare, Cervantes, and Sir Walter.*[10]

In this mode are many: take William Cory at Eton reading the *most sublime thing in literature*, Edward Irving's *Journal: window open, sun burning, a cock crowing on the other side of the street;* and to his surprise (and delight) Jeff, his Virginian

[1] *Letters and Lit. Remains.* i, 23. [2] *Ib.* i, 22. [3] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 90. [4] *Ib.* 52. [5] *Ib.* 118. [6] *More Letters.* 8. [7] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 171. [8] *More Letters.* 63. [9] *Ib.* 77. [10] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 15.

nightingale, begins to sing: *what a puddle life is, what an ocean Irving's life was;*[1] the *Walter-Scott world* is *the best world, the true golden world;*[2] he relishes Virgil as the *founder of historical romance*, the *Aeneid* being the *real forerunner* of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel, more so of Waverley;*[3] he rests with John Henry Newman's *Poems*, then *a new book, full of oldness—old sacredness, old mystery, and the romance of theology;*[4] he is puzzled whilst enjoying Victor Hugo's novels: *Les Travailleurs de la Mer* is a *very pretty, noble book*, if you *skip resolutely;*[5] the *Misérables* is a *pathological work, almost a synoptic view of human suffering*, which he compares with *Job*, with the *Inferno*, with *Lucretius;*[6] but what a *fool* is Balzac *in his jingles—'Liberty is Peace'*, *'Congress is Progress'*. Cory appeals to *law-books, memoir-books, Plato, Butler*, to *save us from such delusions.*[7] Like FitzGerald and Horace Walpole, he is fastidious, but less catholic in choice; *Balzac* leaves a bitter taste in his mind which is cleansed away by a dose of *Octave Feuillet;*[8] he realizes his power, but does not *praise him as our fanatics praise Shakespeare*, because he has *hardly any dramatic skill*, a *dreadfully heavy hand, bad touch, morbid love of horrors*, and *insincere admiration of Catholicism and Royalism;*[9] *George Eliot* is *very noble, wise, sublime*, but *her human beings don't live with* him *for life;*[10] he is uncertain about *Shelley*, will only abide him in extracts, but *heartily* admires *Swinburne;*[11] abhors Ruskin's *rant about economics*, and *goes steadily year after year to his great books;*[12] *Wilhelm Meister* is *absolute bosh*,[13] and the *Epic of Hades below the standard of Eton boys' compositions.*[14]

Dr. John Brown, the author of *Rab and his Friends*, does nothing but eat and read;[15] his book-fare, Southey's *Bunyan*, the *Elixir of the Devil*, and *The Doctor;* lots of Shakespeare's *Poems* and the third volume of Carlyle's *French Revolution; it is glorious; and now I am regaling myself in 'Midshipman Easy' . . . and then I mean to have the 'King's Own'*. Some retain their hedonism in the midst of household cares, as Dorothy Wordsworth at Grasmere: *Sauntered a good deal in the garden, bound*

[1] *Letters and Journals.* 225. [2] *Ib.* 184. [3] *Ib.* 451. [4] *Ib.* 215. [5] *Ib.* 176. [6] *Ib.* 391. [7] *Ib.* 374. [8] *Ib.* 270. [9] *Ib.* 389. [10] *Ib.* 420. [11] *Ib.* 454. [12] *Ib.* 351. [13] *Ib.* 355. [14] *Ib.* 294. [15] Letters. 59.

carpets, mended old clothes, read 'Timon of Athens', dried linens; read Boswell in the house in the morning, and after dinner under the bright yellow leaves of the orchard. She would soothe her bardic brother with *Shakespeare*, or with equal delight listen to him reading his own poems, hot from creation. She records with a glow how she and William and Mary sat round the fire on Christmas Eve (1801) reading *Chaucer*, and, with a different and more wistful glow, how one summer's day (June 10, 1802) Coleridge comes over the hills by Grisedale with *a sack full of books, etc., and a branch of mountain ash*, the more romantic for having been attacked on the way by a cow.[1] William Cowper was another of our good loiterers, he looked forward to the visit of his *dearest coz*, Lady Hesketh, and for the enjoyment of great books in the retreat in his orchard, the best winter-walk in all the parish, sheltered from the east, from the north-east, and open to the sun, except at his rising, all the day: *Then we will have Homer and Don Quixote*, he says, *and then we will have saunter and chat, and one more laugh before we die*, and the delectable orchard is alive with *creatures of all kinds:* poultry of *every denomination, and pigs, the drollest in the world.*[2]

Maurice Hewlett cherished biography and history. He could *pick up* and *browse happily* upon *The Lives of the Poets* as upon the *life of a grocer's boy, if it were printed. Anybody's life is interesting*, he well says, *or anybody's letters;* but *outdated* history, as *Robertson and Hume*, is *mainly unreadable;* not so *Morley and Prescott, Macaulay, Carlyle, and Michelet, though you need not believe a word they say.* He could always read *Gibbon* until a friend bade him notice how nearly every sentence in him ended with a *possessive case.* It was *horribly true*, and killed his pleasure, for henceforward he only read *to find out how true it was*, which is not reading but *a dreary game of Patience.*[3]

In such wise have men and women of taste and leisure added richness to their days by entrancing their idle moments

[1] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth.* [2] *Letters.* Ed. Frazer. ii, 196.
[3] *Extemporary Essays.* 119–20.

with the magic and mystery of illustrious words; and finding in them keys to charm

> Magic casements, opening on the foam
> Of perilous seas, in faery-lands forlorn;[1]

and discovering also that in such dalliance they are procurers of

> A sweet content
> Passing all wisdom, or its fairest flower.[2]

XII. THE TWILIGHT OF THE BIBLIOPHILE

The passion for books continues and even increases to the end. Anthony Trollope looked for happiness in his closing years first to his work, then to the love of those who loved him, and then to his books.[3] But many bibliophiles, when the shadows draw out, find consolation in books alone: *as the years go by, I value books more and more*, said Henry Jackson;[4] but as they grow older they roam less and less from one book to another, *for the books we plan to read in our old age are something like the places where we should wish to grow old.*[5] *Come*, cried George Gissing,[6] towards the close of his life, *once more before I die I will read 'Don Quixote'*. Montaigne confessed that *this old and heavie-paced minde of mine, will no more be pleased with Aristotle, or tickled with good Ovid.* The *quaint inventions* which *ravished* him in the past now *scarcely entertain* him; but he turns to Virgil, Lucretius, Catullus, and Horace again with joy. Charles Lamb thanks Payne Collier for the gift of a fine copy of the *Decameron* which came *just as he was wanting something of the sort*, and he confesses that he takes *less pleasure in books than heretofore*, preferring *books about books;* Dr. Johnson's *ardour for literature never failed;*[7] in his seventy-fourth year he *read all Virgil through*, and was reading and

[1] Keats, 'Ode to a Nightingale'. [2] R. H. Horne, *Orion*. iii, 2. [3] *Autobiography*. World's Classics. 335. [4] *Henry Jackson, O.M., A Memoir*. Parry. 132. [5] Joubert, *Selected Thoughts*. Trans. Lyttleton. 174. [6] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft*. 244. [7] Boswell. *Life*. Ed. Hill. i, 446.

discussing *Homer* as well;[1] Walter Savage Landor, on the eve of his eighty-third year, reads little, chiefly *Punch* and *Household Words; I want*, he says, *amusing ideas not serious ones;*[2] and was thus unlike the old bachelor in Crabbe's *Tales of the Hall:*

> My books were changed; I now preferred the truth
> To the light reading of unsettled youth;

but although *novels grew tedious*, by *choice or chance*, he *still had interest in the wild romance.*

Edward FitzGerald was faithful to his old friends, the classics of Greece and Rome, France and England, throughout his life, but when he was nigh on sixty years, he implored Quaritch not *to waste his learned Catalogues* on him, for he now bought nothing but *Mudie's Secondhand Memoirs*—an exaggeration, as his letters to his illustrious bookseller themselves prove;[3] as he grew still older he sought out in books, as he told Sir Samuel Laurence, *People, Places, and Things, which I don't and can't see;* when one gets *old and dry*, he said, one *thirsts* for what is *delightful* rather than profound;[4] but to the end of his life he never tired of *Sir Walter Scott* and *Don Quixote*, who with his *blessed Sévigné, Crabbe and John Wesley*, were his *last and great hobbies.*[5] Carlyle, when over eighty, *kept on reading assiduously, sometimes till past midnight, in spite of all endeavours to get him to bed*, and during the spring of 1879 (his eighty-fourth year) he read *through all Shakespeare;*[6] *of late years putting aside the Latin classics*, says Anthony Trollope,[7] *I have found my greatest pleasure in our old English dramatists;* Coventry Patmore, in his seventy-third year, could no longer read *consecutive thinkers on Spiritual matters*, they made him feel as if he were *going mad*, and he became *impatient of all reading except novels*, which he *devoured eagerly*, gaining from them *spiritual apprehensions* which were of *great value* to him.[8]

Benjamin Disraeli found consolation in books, and during his last few days at Hughenden he would read the *History of*

[1] *Ib.* iv. 218. [2] *Letters and Unpublished Writings.* 118–19. [3] *Letters to Bernard Quaritch.* 10. [4] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 378. [5] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 186. [6] FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 441. [7] *Autobiography.* World's Classics. 335. [8] *Memoirs.* Champneys. ii, 164.

the Venetian Republic, Lucian, Horace, and *Virgil,* of whom he grew more and more fond;[1] Lord Grenville, Prime Minister of England and bibliophile, loved books all his days; a friend who used to visit him gives a picture of him in his old age, *sitting summer and winter on the same sofa with his favourite books on the shelves just above his head; Roger Ascham among them; Milton always within reach. He, at any rate in his sixty-sixth year, was clear as to the choice between literature and politics. A Minister leaves him to go to his office. 'I would rather he was there than I,' says Grenville. 'If I was to live my life over again,' he continued, 'I should do very differently.'* Lord Rosebery gives out that Sir Robert Walpole in his retirement was desolate because he had never cultivated *the divine solace of books.* Seeing a friend reading in the library at Houghton, Walpole said: *I wish I took as much delight in reading as you do; it would be the means of alleviating many tedious hours in my present retirement, but, to my misfortune, I have no pleasure in such pursuits.* And to Henry Fox he said: *You can read. It is a great happiness. I totally neglected it when I was in business, which has been the whole of my life, and to such a degree that I cannot now read a page—a warning to all Ministers.*[2] Reading needs practice as much as any other art, otherwise the technique becomes atrophied, as taste itself may die or degenerate from other causes. Charles Darwin, for instance, was so immersed in scientifical research that, in later life, he *lost all pleasure in poetry of any kind, including Shakespeare.*[3] Hazlitt firmly supports early and continuous reading in his *Advice to a Schoolboy: Reading,* he says, *is perhaps the greatest pleasure you will have in life; the one you will think of longest, and repent of least,* and if his life had been *more full of calamity* than it had been, he confesses he would live it over again, in order to read the books he read in his youth.[4] But he was an exception among book-lovers in one respect, for towards the end of his days, he confesses,[5] books in a great measure lost their power over him; and although the reading of

[1] *Disraeli.* Maurois. Chap. x. [2] Qt. Lord Rosebery, *Appreciations and Addresses.* 152–7. [3] *Life and Letters.* F. Darwin. i, 33. [4] Hazlitt, *Conduct of Life.* [5] 'On Reading Old Books', *The Plain Speaker.* ii, 74–5.

Mr. Keats's 'Eve of St. Agnes' made him regret he was not young again, the *beautiful and tender images there conjured up* moved him no longer, they merely flitted across his fancy: *The sharp luscious flavour, the fine aroma is fled, and nothing but the stalk, the bran, the husk of literature is left.*

He that will know, therefore, how to use books so as to get out of them full measure of content, let him learn how the happiest readers have read at all times; how they have made books at one with their days, and thus found peace at the end. *To the end I shall be reading*, bragged Gissing,[1] and he meant to the end he would be happy, but not as those who flirt with books in their youth and then abandon them, and so, like grasshoppers, whilst they sing over their cups all summer, they starve in winter. Cicero implored Atticus[2] not to promise his library to anyone, *quamvis acrem amatorem inveneris*, however passionate a wooer, for he himself was *saving up*, as they say, to buy the books *ut illud subsidium senectuti*, as a prop for his old age. Macaulay never ceased to read in all his days. Towards the end he loved best to browse among his books, nibbling choice morsels as he roved: *I read miscellaneous trifles from the back rows of my books*,[3] Nathan's *Reminiscences of Byron*, Colman's *Broad Grins*, Strange's *Letters to Lord Bute*, Gibbon's *Vindication*, and his answer to Warburton about the Sixth *Aeneid*, Swift's *Polite Conversations* and Arbuthnot's *John Bull;* a few weeks before his death he began Nichol's *'Literary Anecdotes': a ponderous row of nine volumes, each containing seven or eight hundred closely printed pages. He searched and sifted this vast repertory of eighteenth-century erudition and gossip with a minute diligence such as few men have the patience to bestow upon a book which they do not intend to re-edit;* he read at the rate of a volume a week, finishing and annotating the entire work between the 17th day of October and the 21st of December, 1859.[4] A week later the greatest reader of all time was found dead seated at the table in his library with an open book before him.[5]

Thus would all good bookmen wish to die, as soldiers in

[1] *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 46. [2] *Ad Atticum.* i, 10. [3] *Life and Letters.* Trevelyan. ii, 325. [4] *Life and Letters.* ii, 401. [5] *Ib.* ii, 405.

action, as men of affairs at their work, as sailors at sea, amid their appropriate surroundings doing their work, shining to the end, rather than rusting out; and if regret will not be absent, *for the pain of parting with our happiness still rises in proportion to the length of its continuance*,[1] yet many a bookman has been able to make a happy end *holding in his hands a particular beloved volume*.[2] John Donne was so enamoured of his books that when he observed that there was a vault under his study he hoped to *die reading; since* his *book and a grave are so near*.[3] And so happily have many of them passed in the midst of that life which was their sole passion, the world of books:

> Lying dead among thy books,
> The peace of God in all thy looks![4]

Giovanni Lami, the great Italian librarian and collector, whose memory is still preserved in the Greek collection which he gave to the University of Florence, spent his life among books and *died with a manuscript in his arms;*[5] and so died Magliabecchi, in his old cane-chair, book in hand, books around him; Grolier, *the Prince of book-collectors*, died as he would have wished, *surrounded by his books*, in his elegant mansion in the Rue de Bussy, Paris.[6]

Petrarch died alone in his library at Arqua, his head resting on an open book, the manuscript of his *Life of Caesar* unfinished before him, as Plato is said to have died long before with his head on Sophron's *Jests;* Fenton, the poet, died, in 1730, at Lady Trumbal's house at Easthampstead, among his *books and papers;*[7] Leibnitz died in a chair with the *Argenis* of Barclay in his hand;[8] when Sir William Osler was near his end, he asked to have Milton's *Nativity* read to him *from his precious first edition;*[9] Francis Thompson's final companions were Jacobs's *Many Cargoes* and a prayer-book;[10] Henry Bradshaw, our great bibliographer, was found dead by his

[1] 'Fruendis voluptatibus crescit carendi dolor.' Pliny, *Letters*. Melmoth. Loeb Ed. viii, 5. [2] Field, *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*. 169. [3] Letter to Sir H. G. (*c.* 1608). [4] 'Bayard Taylor', Longfellow. [5] *The Great Book-Collectors*. Elton. 73. [6] *Ib.* 147. [7] *Ib.* 77. [8] W. Roberts, *Book-Hunter in London*. xv. [9] *Life*. Cushing. ii, 684. [10] *Life*. Meynell. 350.

servant in his room at Cambridge, sitting at his table, with *a little Irish book* in front of him.[1] Leigh Hunt lived for books, and, like Donne, prayed to die among them: *if fortune turns her face once more in kindness upon me before I go, I may chance, some quiet day, to lay my overbeating temples on a book, and so have the death I most envy*.[2] Père Jacob, in his treatise on famous libraries, tells of his journey to Ferrara, where he visited the tomb of Coelius, who was *buried among his books, at his own desire*, not, as he says, *like a miser in the midst of his riches*, but like a lover among the treasures of his heart.[3] And methinks 'tis not altogether unfit that when these true lovers depart this life, they should thus pass away among the *dear creations of the brain*, confident belike that they will take up their joy, renew their old companionships, for as the poet sings:[4]

> O then the bliss of blisses, to be freed
> From all the wants by which the world is driven;
> With liberty and endless time to read
> The libraries of Heaven!

[1] Prothero, *Memoir of Henry Bradshaw*. 322. [2] 'My Books', *Essays*. Camelot Ed. 303. [3] *Ma République*. [4] Robert Leighton.

PART XII

HOW BOOKMEN CONQUER TIME AND PLACE

I. THE PROPER TIME FOR READING

The time to read is any time: *no apparatus, no appointment of time and place, is necessary.*[1] It is the only art which can be practised at any hour of the day or night, *whenever the time and inclination comes, that is your time for reading;*[2] in joy or sorrow, health or illness. *The mood for a book sometimes rushes upon one, either one knows not why, or in consequence, perhaps, of some trifling suggestion.*[3] Gissing tells how one day at dusk he was out walking when the sight of an old farmhouse, with the doctor's gig waiting at the door and a light in an upper window, put him so strongly in mind of *Tristram Shandy* that he must hurry home to *plunge into* the book, which he had not opened for twenty years. Nothing gave him greater pleasure than the thought that there were times when he could *sit reading, quietly reading all day long;* 'tis a common dream of them all whether it comes true or not, they would be reading *a mane ad noctem usque.*[4]

Yet it is folly to wait upon opportunity. The time to read is now, not hereafter. We must make time or miss our joy, as that friend of Hamerton's who *indulged in wonderful illusions about reading, collected several thousand of volumes, all fine editions, but died without having cut their leaves.* Well may Hamerton say that reading is the most *illusory* of all the work *we propose to ourselves,* nothing easier than the intention to read the *vastest literatures* in the *indefinite future,* and to be defeated by time.[5] Never put off till to-morrow the book you can read to-day.

Milton was *up and stirring, in Winter often 'ere the Sound of*

[1] John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to his Son.* [2] C. F. Richardson, *Choice of Books.* 44 [3] Gissing, *Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft.* 144–7. [4] 'From morning till night.' [5] Hamerton, *Intellectual Life.* 147.

any Bell awake Men to Labour, or to Devotion; in Summer as oft with the Bird that first rouses, or not much tardier to read good Authors, or cause them to be read, till the Attention be weary, or Memory have his full Fraught;[1] but Dr. Johnson, in the other extreme, could not remember the time since he left Oxford that he rose early except when he was writing the *Rambler;*[2] and Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy* was *the only book that ever took him out of bed two hours sooner than he wished to rise.*[3] Samuel Pepys rose at four o'clock in the morning to read Cicero's *Second Oration;* Macaulay, when in Calcutta, read ancient literature every morning from five to nine; on September 9th, 1850, he was up soon after six reading *Cobbett with admiration, pleasure, and abhorrence,* and every now and then, *on an idle afternoon,* he read one of Plutarch's *Lives;*[4] Coleridge was a matutinal reader, and once announced that *Southey* and *Bowles* were his *only morning companions;*[5] but he confessed that he could read Beaumont and Fletcher's *Beggar's Bush* from *morning to night.*[6] Stevenson could read early and late, but *Virgil* was *not good fun on an empty stomach.*[7]

Others prefer to read late in the day, and far into the night, keeping themselves awake by wet towels and vinegar compresses applied to the head; copious draughts of coffee; hard chairs, etc. The Chinese scholar, Sun Ching, always tied his pig-tail *to a beam overhead to prevent himself from dozing over his books.*[8] Ringelbergius opposed the demands of sleep by sleeping transversely on two boards so that he might waken betimes and resume his reading. But with many notable readers such devices are unnecessary. St. Anselmn's zeal was so *excessive* that the *time of meals* frequently passed by unnoticed, and *he applied himself to his literary enquiries* far into the night,[9] and Magliabecchi read all day and as far into the night as possible, and when exhausted fell asleep among his books.[10]

[1] 'Apology for Smectymnuus.' *Works.* (1697.) 333. [2] *Johnsonian Miscellanies,* Hill. i, 16. [3] *Life.* Ed. Hill. ii, 121. [4] *Life & Letters.* i, 385. [5] *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 107. [6] *Table Talk.* 212. [7] *Letters.* Ed. Colvin. ii, 126. [8] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 688. [9] *St. Anselmn,* Mohler. Trans. Rymer. 9, 19. [10] Buck, *Anecdotes.* i, 246.

Milton's genius was revealed in his *impetuosity in learning*, which, the poet himself admitted, *seized him with such eagerness* that after his twelfth year he *scarce ever went to bed before midnight;*[1] in Huysman's *A Rebours*,[2] Des Esseintes sits up all night brooding over that old Latin poem *De Laude Castitatis*, written in the reign of Gondebald, by Avitus, Bishop Metropolitan of Vienna, and when he looked at his watch and found it was three o'clock, he simply lit a cigarette and *plunged* into it once again. Henry Crabb Robinson devoured a great part of *Waverley* after dinner; E. B. Cowell, who taught Edward FitzGerald Persian, *constantly*, says our English Omar,[3] *reads Miss Austen at night after his Sanscrit Philology is done: it composes him, like Gruel: or like Paisiello's Music, which Napoleon liked above all other, because he said it didn't interrupt his thoughts;* Dibdin read *early and late;*[4] Isaac D'Israeli was the *companion* of his *evening hours and lone musings beyond midnight*, when he was at Oxford: *I once*, he says, *saw the gothic battlements outside my window streaked with the dappled light of the morning, as I retired to rest closing the 'Curiosities of Literature'.*[5]

Dr. Johnson read a book of the *Aeneid every night, so it was done in twelve nights, and*, he said, *I had great delight in it;*[6] Lord Chesterfield (in a letter, 26.xii.1749) records that he often read through the night, going to bed at six in the morning; I *should certainly have read very little* (between the ages of twenty and forty), *if I had not been up when my acquaintances were in bed;* which recalls Cicero (*Pro Archia Poeta*) on Seneca: *when others loitered, and took their pleasure, he was continually at his books;* and when Lord Chesterfield was old and *cut out of living company* by his deafness, he had recourse to the dead, *whom alone I can hear*, and he assigned them their stated hours and audience: *Solid folios are the people of business, with whom I converse in the morning. Quartos are the easier mixed company, with whom I sit after dinner;* and he passed his evenings in *the light, and often frivolous, chit-chat of small octavos and duodecimos.* Lord Orrery read consistently and late: *'Clarissa' kept us up till two in the*

[1] Pattison, *Milton*. 5. [2] Chap. vi, 100. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 335–6. [4] Dibdin, *Reminiscences*. i, 281. [5] *Ib*. 87–8. [6] *Life*. iv, 218.

morning. 'Roderick' will keep us up all night, and he, I am told, is to be succeeded again by 'Clarissa', whom I left, adorable girl, at St. Albans;[1] and some years later Lady Orrery reveals a like habit to her lord, complaining of a *horrid headache* through *reading so much of 'Amelia' last night till it was very late.*[2] Benjamin Robert Haydon hurt his eyes by reading Stone's *Chronicles* late into the night; Hazlitt loved *luxuriating in books*, and remembered sitting up half the night to read *Paul and Virginia*, which he had *picked up at an inn at Bridgewater, after being drenched in the rain all day;*[3] Robert Southey wrote all day and read in the evening: *My after-supper book at present is Erasmus's 'Letters';* Walter Scott sends him *The Lady of the Lake*,[4] which notwithstanding his obstinate habit of getting to bed early, he could not rest until he had finished, and the evening *Rokeby* arrived, he tells Scott, *I did not go to bed till I had read the poem through;*[5] Francis Jenkinson was a late reader on occasion, and one night he records how he killed slugs in his garden for an hour and then read *Hain* till nearly one o'clock.[6]

There are, John Hall thinks (*Horae Vacivae*), *unseasonable times of study* which are *very obnoxious, as after meals, when nature is wholly retired to concoction; or at night times, when she begins to droop for want of rest; hence*, he argues, *so many rheums, defluxions, catarrhs, etc.*, and Burton repeats the same:[7] *hard students are commonly troubled with gouts, catarrhs, rheums, cachexia, bradypepsia, bad eyes, stone, and colick, crudities, oppilations, vertigo, winds, consumptions, and all such diseases as come by overmuch sitting; they are most part lean, dry, ill-coloured, spend their fortunes, lose their wits, and many times their lives, and all through immoderate pains and extraordinary studies.* But in our times, though some may wreck their health and even their lives for books, such immoderate reading is no longer common, and good light and fair print have so added to the amenities of the studious and the hedonist alike, that no great harm can come to them.

[1] *Orrery*. ii, 23. [2] *Ib.* ii, 285. [3] *On Going a Journey*. [4] Southey, *Letters*. World's Classics. 179. [5] *Ib.* 210. [6] *Francis Jenkinson*, Stewart. 116. [7] *Anat. of Melan.* 1904. i, 350–1.

> Whence is thy learning? Hath thy toil
> O'er books consumed the midnight oil?[1]

Electricity and the Daylight Saving Act have turned the point of the old gibe. There still are more than enough of dull writers and stupid readers, but we can no longer blame the *midnight oil*.

Day-light or electric-light, it is now all one: readers will read, no matter what the hour, place, or season, though I find some differences here. Charles Lamb could not read much in the summer;[2] with the poet he prefers taper-time when the year wears chill:

> How pleasing wears the wintry night,
> Spent with the old illustrious dead![3]

They are supported in our own days by many, one[4] even claiming winter the time of the year for reading, *par excellence;* poets and essayists are then *all the more delightful* because they may transport us to *verdant lawns, blossoming trees, budding flowers, blue skies*, etc., when all is *cold and wet outside*.

> But when the skies of shorter days
> Are dark and all the ways are mire,
> How bright upon your books the blaze
> Gleams from the cheerful study fire,
>
> On quartos where our fathers read,
> Enthralled, the book of Shakespeare's play,
> On all that Poe could dream of dread,
> And all that Herrick sang of gay.[5]

Edward FitzGerald thought Southey's *Life of Cowper* not suitable for *every man to read at the fall of the leaf*,[6] that there was some *rocococity* in a gentleman reading *Seneca* in the *middle of February*, in a *remarkably damp cottage*,[7] and he was convinced that *Theocritus* harmonized with the *opening of fine weather;*[8] in the summer of 1866 he had *a sort of craze* for *Sophocles*,[9] but it was his *Sévigné* who always returned to him

[1] Gay, Intro. to *Fables*. [2] *Letters*. Ed. Lucas. ii, 912. [3] Mark Akenside. [4] W. Davenport Adams, *Rambles in Book-Land*. 169. [5] A. Lang, 'To F. L.', *Books and Bookmen*. 38–9. [6] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 34. [7] *Ib*. 125. [8] *Ib*. 41. [9] *More Letters*. 79.

in the spring: *fresh as the Flowers*, he said,[1] and *Crabbe* came as naturally to him at the fall of the leaf.[2] Henry James thought the *Mystical Romances* of Le Fanu *ideal reading for midnight at a country house;* Lionel Johnson believed that even *Beattie on Truth* could *be read in fine weather;*[3] Edward Dowden recommended *Chaucer* for summer reading *when you are not in an intense or a heroic mood,*[4] and Leigh Hunt *the Arabian Nights for all seasons;*[5] but when we have weighed each opinion, most bookmen will agree with Sir Walter Raleigh that *there is no time so good to read a book as when you have just bought it and brought it home.*[6] So if, as among men of affairs, statesmen, and others who are so much occupied that their days are partitioned into several sections each reserved for its particular duty, they will prepare a space for reading, my probem is solved. So I end as I began, the proper time is any time.

II. OF READING PLACES

True readers are not to be kept from books, despite those who argue otherwise, as that meticulous Jewish grammarian, Profiat Duran, who advised students to *read in a pretty well-furnished room* where the eye may be relieved by *beautiful objects; beauty*, he said, *must be everywhere, in your books and in your house.*[7] Charles Lamb expostulates that much depends on *when* and *where* you read; no one, he says, would take up the *Fairy Queen* during *the five or six impatient minutes* before dinner, or, as such a *stop-gap*, a volume of Bishop Andrewes' *Sermons;* and *Milton almost requires a solemn service of music before you enter upon him.*[8] More recent support comes from Maurice Hewlett,[9] who could not read every kind of book while waiting, even in a library; odd that, in such circumstances, he could take down *Dante* or *Homer, open anywhere and be occupied*, but would rather *twiddle* his thumbs than

[1] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 221. [2] *Ib.* 55. [3] *Post Liminium.* 215. [4] *Fragments.* 123. [5] *A Jar of Honey from Mount Hybla.* xiii. [6] *Letters.* i, 144. [7] Abrahams, *Jewish Life in the Middle Ages.* 355. [8] 'Detached Thoughts', *Last Essays of Elia.* [9] *Extemporary Essays.* 119.

attempt *Paradise Lost. You seem to need*, he reckons, '*the consecration and the poet's dream*' *for the one, and not for the other.* Stevenson found *Horace* unsuitable for reading *under the open heaven*,[1] but he read Zola's *Bête Humaine in Noumea, listening the while to the strains of the convict band.*[2] Lionel Johnson, who could and did read in any condition or place, believed that special books were appropriate to be read in particular places, as Walter Pater, the *constant cordiality* of whose writings makes them books to be read with equal pleasure *under the garden trees* or *by the fire.*[3] Sir Walter Raleigh, on the other hand, doubts whether books can be read in wild places. '*Social*' *books won't stand the criticism of the Atlantic Coast,*[4] and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* in such a place *was merely half-baked and unreal and ignorant.* Leigh Hunt would seem to prescribe definite times and places for reading this or that book; *How can I take Juvenal into the fields*, he enquires, *or take Valcarenghius*' '*De Aortae Aneurismate*' *to bed with me?* How could he expect *to walk before the face of nature with the one* or to tire his *elbow properly with the other;* how could he *stick up Coke or Littleton against something on the dinner-table*, his taste divided between *a fresh paragraph and a mouthful of salad?*[5]

Charles Lamb preferred to read indoors, although he could read in the open air on occasions, as shall be mentioned in its place, but he stiffly maintained the necessity for harmony between the reader and his surroundings, and would not himself like to have been *caught in the serious avenues of some cathedral alone, reading Candide;*[6] but he could never *contemplate without affection* those impecunious readers of the open-air who *not having the wherewithal to buy or hire a book, filch a little learning at the open stalls*, under the jealous eye of the bookseller. He gives an instance of one who got through two volumes of *Clarissa* in this wise, before the stall-keeper *damped his laudable ambition, by asking him whether he meant to purchase the work;* the thief of reading *admitted that under no circumstances of his life did he ever peruse a book with half the satisfaction which he*

[1] *Letters.* Ed. Colvin. i, 65. [2] *Ib.* ii, 195. [3] *Post Liminium.* 28. [4] *Letters.* ii, 587. [5] 'My Books', *Essays.* Camelot Ed. 297. [6] 'Detached Thoughts', *Last Essays of Elia.*

took in those uneasy snatches.[1] A still more notable instance is that of John Beale, a seventeenth-century scientist and divine who wrote on the Orchards of Herefordshire; the bookstalls were his main library; at them he would browse indifferent to the tempestuous glances of the bookseller, memorizing exactly for future reference the contents of whole volumes.

All this I doubt not; but it is plain also that few circumstances are too strange or difficult for the enjoyment of a book; nothing so common as invincible and indomitable readers; place, condition, etc., are nothing in this case. Bookmen dictate their own terms to vandal time. Giles has a pretty story of a Chinese poet and alchemist, whose mental powers were so quick that he could remember any book after reading it over once, and who was taught by supernatural beings the *art of hibernating like an animal*, enabling him to sleep for one hundred days at a time, yet he *was never seen without a book in his hands.*[2]

This is only one of many instances I could cite (and shall do so) to prove that the born reader reads anywhere, anywhen, by day or night, by the light of the moon and the stars, or even, so I have heard, by lightning or the *aurora borealis;* by sunlight and candlelight, gaslight or electricity; on land or sea, walking or riding, standing or sitting or lying in bed; on chairs or sofas, on couches, in hammocks, in baths and at stool; on board ships, in punts, rowing-boats, and canoes; up trees; on ladders; on omnibuses, or bicycles, in railway trains, or automobiles, cabs, carriages, tramway cars, jaunting cars, buggies, balloons, airships or aeroplanes, or any other vehicle for sea, land or air; in hospitals, penitentiaries, prisons; in kitchens, parlours, caves, arbours, etc.; on the backs of horses, camels, mules, asses, elephants; in hot or cold climates, in all countries and all places; in houses, hotels, theatres, mines, concert halls, submarines, bar-parlours, saloons, billiard-rooms, turkish baths, sun-boxes, pastry cooks', barbers' shops, waiting-rooms at railway stations; in the ante-rooms of Ministers of State, and the waiting-rooms of physicians, surgeons, dentists, etc.; in churches during service, surreptitiously and

[1] *Ib.* [2] *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 105–6.

not always the *Holy Word;* in law courts; in streets walking or standing or leaning against a wall; in fields or forests; on the *Underground* in London, the *Overhead* at Liverpool and the *El* at New York, regardless of noise; during air raids and bombardments, wars, revolutions and pestilences; in joy and sorrow, health and sickness.

No end to reading and readers as there is no end to books, and I say again, no particular time or place is essential to reading. Every place a library or study to your true reader; undergraduates at Oxford and Cambridge make a pleasant study of a punt or a canoe while gliding along the green tunnels of the Cherwell or between the willows and lawns and under the bridges of the cool Granta. *In the very Court itself before the Senate fill'd,* Cato *would be reading Greek books;*[1] Ben Jonson rested from his work as a bricklayer in Lincoln's Inn Fields to read a book, and he was thus discovered deep in *Horace, by the great Camden, who sent him to the University at Cambridge.*[2] Place and position are matters of taste, some for one, some for another. Dr. Johnson was once discovered by Boswell, reading the '*Mémoires de Fontenelle*', *leaning and swinging upon the low gate into the court,* of Mrs. Thrale's house, *without his hat.*[3] Many observers of bookfolk could recount such incidents out of their own experiences; I have a record of G. K. Chesterton being espied on Ilkley Moor, in Yorkshire, one cold day in spring, *leaning in the rain against a budding tree, absorbed in the pages of a little red book;*[4] and I heard that same author tell how once, whilst riding in a hansom cab, reading one of his own admirable essays, he observed a commotion in the street through which the cab was passing and, to his astonishment, discovered that his situation had been strangely and suddenly translated, for instead of being seated comfortably reading in the cab, the cab was upside down and he sat beneath it in the road, still reading. But this may be a tale: so I proceed. Sir Joshua Reynolds, coming home from Italy, found Johnson's *Life of Savage* the *book of the hour,* and

[1] *Romae Antiquae Descriptio.* Eng. Ed. (1678.) 368. [2] Spence, *Anecdotes.* n. p. 4. [3] *Life.* iii, 247. [4] Holbrook Jackson, 'G. K. Chesterton', *Romance and Reality.* 141.

knowing nothing of the author, for it was published anonymously, he *began reading it while he was standing with his arm leaning against a chimney-piece*, and was *unable to lay the book down until he had finished it*, so that when he attempted to move, *he found his arm totally benumbed*.[1]

Shelley *was to be found, book in hand, at all hours; reading in season and out of season; at table, in bed, and especially during a walk; not only in the quiet country, and in retired paths; not only at Oxford, in the public walks, and High Street, but in the most crowded thoroughfares of London*.[2] Leigh Hunt hated *to read in public, or in strange company*,[3] but he would have done either (I say) rather than be deprived of books, which were his *staff of life*. Matthew Prior had other tastes, for he read his master, *Horace*, in the Rhenish Tavern, where he was found by the Earl of Dorset, who so marvelled at his skill in Latin that he gave him an education in literature.[4] James Agate tells how at a performance of Sacha Guitry's *Nono*, William Archer, who sat next to him, slept *through almost the entire performance, waking up in the intervals to draw from his pocket and peruse a volume of Gibbon's 'Decline and Fall'*.[5]

And now, the case being put, I shall proceed to show their variety and what difference there is between them, and to enumerate notable examples in support of my claim that books may be enjoyed at any time or in any circumstance; but, since which is the best place hath many opinions, I will not dictate. Lest, however, some cavillers complain that I have remembered every condition but the normal, I must not forget mine own fireside (and yours), for all of us, book-men, students, scholars, etc., have known its delight as a vantage point for the attack upon a book. Macaulay[6] defined a scholar as *a man who can read Plato with his feet on the fender;* and what better place could he have? I need not waste time upon an answer.

[1] Boswell's *Johnson*. Ed. Hill. i, 165. [2] Hogg, *Shelley*. London Lib. Ed. 84. [3] 'My Books', *Essays*. Camelot Ed. 289. [4] Bickley, *Life of Prior*. 13–15. [5] *Sunday Times*. Review of Three Plays, by William Archer. [6] *Life*, Trevelyan. i.

III. THE ASSOCIATION OF BOOK AND PLACE

Many there are of the more romantic sort that seek to read their favourite authors under particular circumstances or in places associated with the theme of the book or with its writing. Thus they will take out *Dante* at Florence, *Shakespeare* at Stratford, *Rabelais* at Chinon, *Gibbon* among the ruins of the Forum at Rome, where he first imagined his mighty history, or at Lausanne where he wrote it; *Wordsworth* at Grasmere or Rydal, *Keats* at Hampstead, *Dickens* at Rochester or in Lincoln's Inn Fields, *Lamb* in the sparrow-haunted quadrangles of the Temple, *Goethe* at Weimar, *Rousseau* on the islet which bears his name at Geneva, *Emerson* at Concord, *Thoreau* beside Walden Pond, *Tennyson* where he lived at Freshwater Down, *Meredith* on Box Hill in Surrey, where he loved to breast the south-west wind, *Byron* at Venice and *Shelley* on the shores of the Bay of Spezzia, where his body was burnt after the sea had given it up.

To read *Wordsworth* on Westminster Bridge, *Browning* in Venice, *Omar Kháyyám* at Naishapur, *Gray* in the meadows at Eton, *Matthew Arnold* on Cumnor Hill or beside the 'stripling Thames' at Bablock Hythe, *William Morris* at Kelmscott, *Anatole France* on the Quai Voltaire, *Yeats* at Coole, *Rupert Brooke* at Grantchester, *Henry Newbolt* on Plymouth Hoe, *Belloc* on the Sussex Downs, *Lionel Johnson* at Winchester, *Richard le Gallienne* in the Strand, *John Davidson* in Fleet Street, *Ernest Dowson* in Soho, *Austin Dobson* in Queen Anne's Gate, *Walt Whitman* on *fish-shaped Paumanok*, or *Kipling* in Simla. These are accounted experiences.

Some are for historic spots and are brisk to read to themselves or aloud amid the ruins of Pompeii; in the portico of the Parthenon at Athens, or in the shadows of the baths of Caracalla at Rome; on the Pyramids of Egypt or beside the great Sphinx; in York Minster, Notre Dame of Paris, St. Peter's at Rome, Monreale near Palermo; in the Teatro Greco at Syracuse or Taormina, etc.

For Macaulay, journeys to famous places were excuses for reading books about them. Thus, in Italy, his *journey lay over the field of Thrasymene, and as soon as the sun rose* he read *Livy's description of the scene*, wishing he *had brought Polybius too;*[1] Samuel Rogers and his sister read the *concluding passages* of the *Decline and Fall* on *the very spot where they were written;*[2] and Malcolm Macmillan *lay down against a fragment in the Forum and read Horace* to a friend who was making *architectural notes.*[3]

William Beckford, on his journey in Portugal, proposed to read his *favourite pocket companions, Monteiro and Manoel Maria Bocage* in *a little cavern hewn out of a pumice rock, blessed with a little spring, and mantled all over with the deliciously-scented flowers of the Lonicera tribe in wild profusion—exactly the sort of grotto described by Gil Blas as the resort of Algerian pirates.* He longed to read *in total solitude*, and thus share *the deep reveries* of his *intellectual and Cowley-like poets;* but *fate* denied him *such dreamy happiness.*[4]

For my part I am not so romantically affected in my choice of reading places. I can read anywhere, but am not indifferent to that *genius loci*, which is not in the place itself but is brought there by recollection, experience, association:

> a sunset-touch,
> A fancy from a flower-bell, someone's death,
> A chorus-ending from Euripides.[5]

George Wyndham was moved by such feelings and he left to Charles Gatty *a legacy of places glorified by such experiences: the end of the garden at Derwent where he read to me Patmore's Ode to the Blessed Virgin, the smoking-room at Derwent where he and Alfred Lyttleton and myself chose passages in turn from a Globe Shakespeare, and I read the Duke of Exeter's description to the King of the death of York and Suffolk on the field of Agincourt.*[6]

There are those that are especially affected as much and more from the reading of books in particular places, for it cuts both ways: one would read a passage or a whole work

[1] *Life*, Trevelyan. ii, 31. [2] Rogers, *Table Talk*. 198. [3] *Letters*. 89. [4] *Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaça and Batalha*. 31–2. [5] Browning, 'Bishop Blougram's Apology', 182-4, *Men and Women*. [6] Charles T. Gatty, *George Wyndham, Recognita*. 11–12.

in the place of its inspiration, another will read a book in some place not associated with its authorship or its theme, and ever afterwards hold that place in memory as the scene of a capital experience. The sum is this: that varieties of association are excellent good for books as well as bookmen.

IV. VARIOUS READERS AND THEIR READING PLACES

Happy the bookman who can read anywhere, secure in his book from all common annoyances: the tumult of traffic in cities, noise of trains, omnibuses, aeroplanes, automobiles, motor-cycles and pneumatic road-drills, with their vibrant oscillations. But not all can train themselves to endure such inconveniences: some cannot read in public or amidst noise; and who does not prefer quietude?

> The love of learning, the sequestered nooks,
> And all the sweet serenity of books.[1]

Books are born *of the very sigh that silence heaves*,[2] they are the voice of silence and quiet time, the colonizers of solitude; *true reading demands seclusion, leisure, freedom from the crowd*,[3] what is gregarious is foreign to it.

To walk or loaf with a book among orchards, gardens, bowers, parks, and arbours, artificial wildernesses, is most sweet; or in wild places, green thickets, copses, oases in the desert, lawns (with rivulets, fountains), and such-like pleasant places, as *Antiochian Daphne* so *deeply bosomed in a thick grove of laurels and cypresses* that it formed *in the most sultry summers a cool and penetrable shade*, where *a thousand streams of the purest water, issuing from every hill, preserved the verdure of the earth and the temperature of the air;* where the senses *were gratified with harmonious sounds and aromatic odours; and the peaceful grove was consecrated to health and joy, to luxury and love;*[4] or those *Quincuncial*, or other geometrical or reticulated gardens of the

[1] Longfellow, 'Morituri salutamus'. [2] Keats, 'I stood tip-toe upon a little hill'. 12. [3] Lang, Intro. *Pleasures of Bookland*, Shaylor. xiii. [4] Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*. xxiii.

ancients, so enviously dilated upon by Sir Thomas Browne, in his *Garden of Cyrus;* or that garden at Athens where Epicurus passed his whole life studying and teaching philosophy, in comparison with which *no other abode seems to contribute so much to both the tranquillity of mind and indolence of body, which he made his chief end.*[1] It is a delectable recreation, for *how much better one's books read in country stillness, than amid the noise of wheels, crowds, etc.*[2] But we need not seek out such pleasant delights in ancient times or distant places, for in our own age in our own dear England they have been tasted, and still are. *I should like very well to be shut up in a garden for a whole summer with no literature but the 'Faerie Queene'*, says Hamerton, and once he *nearly realized that project, but publishers and postmen interfered with it.*[3] Many of the most fortunate of bookmen have rich memories of Christ Church Meadows in Oxford, and those adorable *Backs* of Cambridge

> Where Arthur, Alfred, Fitz, and Brooks
> Lit thought by one another's looks,
> Embraced their jests and kicked their books,
> In England's happier times,[4]

loving them and reading them none the less, as is well known, and I do not find a more pleasant environment for reading than such places, soberly and opportunely used.

But when all is said, it is the greatest of good fortune to be able to defy the world and retreat into a book at any time or place. Many bookmen have done so and still do, by reason of that detachment which, properly disposed, all good books engender. It is the very same faculty which enabled John Wesley to read through Martin Luther's *Comment on the Epistle to the Galatians* and the tenth *Iliad* of Homer and many other profound works, on horseback during his great mission of evangelization: *having other employment at other times. How is it,* he asks, *that no horse ever stumbles while I am reading?* Because, he answers, when reading 'tis his custom to throw his rein on the horse's neck, and, *in riding above an hundred miles, he scarce ever*

[1] Sir William Temple, *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus.* [2] Edward FitzGerald, *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 160. [3] *Intellectual Life.* 147. [4] William Cory, *Ionica,* 'Hersilia'. Third Ed. 193.

remembers *any horse (except two, that would fall head over heels anyway) to fall, or make a considerable stumble while he rode with a slack rein.*[1] This I record by the way, for the benefit of those about to follow his example. For further evidence of such feats take that of Colonel Lawrence, riding across the Arabian Desert on a camel at the head of his Bedouins, reading *Aristophanes* in the original when there was nothing else to be done.[2]

So sensitive a poet as Petrarch could read in all circumstances: *Whether I am being shaved, or having my hair cut, whether I am riding on horse-back or taking my meals, I either read myself or get someone to read to me;*[3] and on the table where he dined, and by the side of his bed, he kept all the materials for writing, out of an instinctive desire to lose no chance of adding to the world's store of delectable books. His favourite, the *Confessions of St. Augustine*, accompanied him everywhere, even on that adventure when he and his brother climbed Mt. Ventoux.[4]

Because he was so great a reader, Sydney Smith[5] called Macaulay a *book in breeches*. He read anything and remembered everything;[6] no place or time inappropriate for the practice of his bookishness. He would read the *Classics* while walking, *Plato* on the Heath at Tunbridge Wells, *Plautus* in the thickets at Bonchurch, sitting down here and there to read the *Poenulus;* and consuming the last five books of the *Iliad* at a stretch, walking over the hills at Malvern; in the train between London and Bangor (16.viii.1849) he read the *Lives of the Emperors*, from Maximin to Carinus inclusive, in the Augustan History; and on another occasion he was so greatly amused and moved that he *was at last forced to turn into a by-path, lest the parties of walkers should see* him *blubbering for imaginary beings, the creations of a ballad-maker who has been dead two thousand seven hundred years.*[7] Yet not in the country alone does he walk and read: such feats are common enough, even to ordinary bookmen. He could thread the crowded streets of

[1] Wesley, *Journal*. 21.iv.1770. [2] *With Lawrence in Arabia*. Lowell Thomas. 153. [3] *Famil. Ep.* lxxii. Qt. Merryweather, *Bibliomania in the Middle Ages*. 73. [4] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca*. i, 323. [5] *Memoir*. 363. [6] *Life and Letters*, Trevelyan. i, 129. [7] *Ib*. ii, 187.

London with his eyes fixed upon a book, *walking as fast as other people walked, and reading a good deal faster than anybody else could read.*[1] He is eminent even among those peripatetic readers who, by instinct or long practice, I know not which, have acquired a sense of direction in which the eye plays but a secondary part, as Thomas Ballard, the painter friend of Samuel Butler, who *was always reading in the streets, and by long practice steering in and out among the passengers on the pavement in a most skilful manner;*[2] and that Unitarian Minister observed by Charles Lamb walking down Snow Hill reading *Lardner* so skilfully that it was a wonder how *he sidled along, keeping clear of secular contacts.*[3] Shelley was no less *absorbed by the volume that was open before him, in Cheapside, in Cranbourne Alley, or in Bond Street, than in a lonely lane, or a secluded library;*[4] and to show that this curious and useful gift is yet extant, there are many Londoners who remember having seen Dr. Furnivall on fine days *quietly walking along bareheaded, reading a book, in all the bustle of Oxford Street.*[5]

Thomas Frognall Dibdin delighted to stroll about Camden Hill in company one day with *Erasmus, Scaliger, Casaubon, and Lipsius*, another with *a volume of old English Divinity, scoring the more striking passages—to be afterwards inserted in a common-place book;*[6] again he mentions sitting on a *grass hillock* in *the green fields of North End contiguous to Gloucester Lodge, with a volume of Baillet in one hand and a Schelhorn in another*, and *Spizelius, Bauer* and *De Bure* close by;[7] with *Johnson and Boswell* he used to sit *hour after hour, and day after day*, in *the groves and gardens* of Oxford, during his college days;[8] and when seeking respite from the labour of compiling his *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, he went down to Ramsgate, *that most interesting of all watering places*, he says,[9] where under *a blue and serene sky*, he *strolled abroad, now with Pope, now with Dryden, and now with Milton.* Mark Rutherford, another peripatetic bookman, *wandered about London streets at 6 o'clock in the*

[1] *Ib.* i, 118. [2] *Butler.* Festing Jones. i, 139. [3] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading', *Last Essays of Elia.* [4] Hogg, *Shelley.* London Lib. Ed. 84. [5] Jessie Currie in Monro, *F. J. Furnivall.* 31. [6] *Reminiscences.* i, 221–2. [7] *Ib.* i, 282. [8] *Ib.* i, 87. [9] *Ib.* ii, 509–10.

morning reading Tennyson's 'Maud';[1] Leigh Hunt never walked without a book, regarding nature *chiefly as a reading-room out of doors, a place to lie down in, under a tree or a haystack, for the better enjoyment of a book;*[2] for he knew, as Petrarch before him, that to carry books into the fields was good, for silence suits them better than the noise of cities; as John Wilson, a London bookseller, has it:

O for a booke and a shadie nooke,
Either in-a-door or out,
With the greene leaves whisp'ring overhede,
Or the streete cries all about,
Where I may Reade all at my ease,
Both of the Newe and Olde,
For a jollie goode Booke whereon to looke,
Is better to me than golde.

This sentiment hath many exponents, as Richard Hooker, that notable prelate of our Church, who, when vicar of Drayton-Beauchamp, in Buckinghamshire, was discovered, Izaak Walton records, by two of his pupils, reading *Horace* while he tended *his small allotment of sheep in a common field, for that his servant had gone home to dine, and assist his wife to do some necessary household business.*[3] Benjamin Robert Haydon retired to *the windmill beyond Kilburn*, where he *lounged on the grass* reading Allan Cunningham's *Lives of the Painters;*[4] Keats would read and loaf on Hampstead Heath with a friend, as John Hamilton Reynolds, whom he invites to go with him and enjoy his *black-letter Chaucer* of 1596;[5]

Then I went indoors, brought out a loaf,
Half a cheese, and a bottle of Chablis;
Lay on the grass and forgot the oaf
Over a jolly chapter of Rabelais;[6]

in his youthful days Edmund Gosse made a reading place of the *turfed hillock* at the root of an elm in his father's garden;

[1] Dorothy V. White, *The Groombridge Diary*. 93. [2] Cosmo Monkhouse, *Life*. 39. [3] Walton's *Lives*. Ed. Henley. 123. [4] *Autobiography*. ii, 247. [5] *Letters*. Ed. Forman. (1895.) 125. [6] Browning, 'Sibrandus Schafnaburgensis', *Dramatic Romances and Lyrics*.

this, he says, *was long my summer reading-desk; for I could lie stretched on the lawn, with my head and shoulders supported by the elm-tree hillock, and the book in a fissure of the rough turf.*[1]

Henry Crabb Robinson walked to Clapton reading *Colonel Jack;*[2] Macaulay roamed the Pontine Marshes with Bulwer's *Alice*, and was more affected by it than by any novel *these many years;*[3] when he visited Angers, in 1843, he enjoyed the *scenery and a book* and was sorry when a Frenchman engaged him in talk;[4] Edward FitzGerald *sauntered in the fields* with the *Anthology* of Stobaeus.[5] Felicia Dorothea Hemans as a young girl would take her Shakespeare up into the branches of an apple-tree in the orchard of her Welsh home, near Abergele, and there study him in shade and quietness,[6] which is a habit much cultivated by young girls, and I may cite a more recent instance in that of Lady Lugard, who in her young days found studious seclusion perched in the branches of a tree, where she remembered reading Carlyle's *French Revolution*, which made her a Democrat.[7] Dorothy Wordsworth read *Henry V* in the orchard at Grasmere while William *lay on the seat;*[8] and William Wordsworth read to her his poems, *Peter Bell* and *Joanna*, on the roadside beside the Rothay;[9] in *The Prelude* he tells how as a young man he would go out for a day's fishing, but lay reading all day: though

> a soft west wind
> Ruffled the waters to the angler's wish,
> For a whole day together, have I lain
> Down by thy side, O Derwent! murmuring stream,
> On the hot stones, and in the glaring sun,
> And there have read, devouring as I read,
> Defrauding the day's glory, desperate![10]

William Cory read *straight through 'Jane Eyre' on the black gnarled, wreathed rocks of Bude when there was a lowering storm-cloud and a sunset on a distant sail, and a hollow roar in the reefs,*

[1] *Father and Son.* Pop. Ed. (1909.) 250. [2] *Diary.* i, 170. [3] *Life,* Trevelyan. ii, 42–3. [4] *Ib.* ii, 131. [5] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 310. [6] Chorley, *Memorials of Mrs. Hemans.* i, 17. [7] *The Times.* 28.i.1929. [8] *Journals.* 119. [9] *Ib.* 119. [10] *Prelude.* v, 481–7.

and the reading broken off by a queer rattle of shingle which turned out to be a sheep fallen from the cliff;[1] George Moore read the *dazzling stanzas* of Shelley *by the shores of a pale green Irish lake;*[2] Lionel Johnson, at Winchester, refused to work at his studies when the heat was *visible and tangible . . . burning away to the heart of the world,* preferring *Lucretius* or *Hugo,* in the sunshine;[3] Newman Flower, the biographer of *Handel,* remembers reading *The Trumpet Major, sitting on a bank,* in Hardy's own shire of Dorset, whilst *waiting for an idle ferret to disturb a dilatory rabbit,* and when he later came to London he finished all Hardy's books *sitting under a gas-lamp after office hours on the Embankment.*[4]

It is recorded that David Blondel, a Protestant minister in the seventeenth century, would lie on the ground with the books he required for his studies all around him;[5] Isaac D'Israeli[6] tells of the biographer of Cujas, who would also study *lying prostrate* on a carpet; and one of Macaulay's earliest memories[7] is of lying on the hearth-rug, eating bread and butter and reading a book; at least two other of our statesmen have indulged a similar reading habit in their boyhood: Mr. Gladstone read *Ivanhoe* when he was nine years old, *I devoured it,* he said, *lying on my stomach on the hearthrug;*[8] and Mr. Stanley Baldwin confessed in a discourse to the English Association that as a small boy he read Scott's novels in the same manner.[9] Prothero gives out that, when a child, the floor was Henry Bradshaw's *favourite place of study,* and once a friend found the infant bibliographer *lying under the table with a sheet of the 'Times' open before him, by the aid of which he was learning to read.*[10]

Francis Thompson could read anywhere; the noisier the environment the more absorbed he became. He found seclusion in the street, the market-place and the tavern. *Already* as a

[1] Cory, *Letters and Journals.* 188. [2] *Confessions of a Young Man.* (1904.) 4. [3] *Some Winchester Letters.* 210. [4] *Sunday Times.* 15.i.28. [5] Buck, *Anecdotes.* i, 246. [6] *Curiosities of Literature.* iii, 330–1. [7] *Life and Letters.* Trevelyan. i, 39. [8] Neville G. Lyttleton, Letter to *The Times.* 29.x.1927. [9] 'Books', *Our Inheritance.* 285. [10] *Memoir of Henry Bradshaw.* 4.

boy, says Everard Meynell,[1] *seeking the highway and the highway's seclusion, he would carry his book to the stairs, away from the constraint of chairs and tables and the unemotional flatness of the floor.* Thomas Gray wished to be always lying on sofas reading *eternal new novels of Crébillon and Marivaux.* Dominie Sampson, Walter Scott[2] tells us, *often opened a volume when half way up the library-steps, fell upon some interesting passage, and, without shifting his inconvenient posture, continued immersed in the fascinating perusal until the servant pulled him by the skirts, to assure him that dinner waited;* Mark Pattison records[3] how his father when at Oxford was caught one night by his tutor, Hodson, reading his favourite *Aristophanes, on the back of Cain and Abel,* and when asked what he did there replied

Αεροβατῶ καὶ περιφρονῶ τὸν ἥλιον.[4]

Shelley delighted to read, sitting naked on the rocks at the Bagni di Lucca, before bathing: *My custom,* he tells Peacock,[5] *is to undress, and sit on the rocks, reading Herodotus, until the perspiration has subsided, and then to leap from the edge of the rock into this fountain—a practice in the hot weather excessively refreshing.* Robert Burns *pored over A Select Collection of English Songs,* which was his *vade mecum,* whilst driving his cart, or walking to work, *song by song, verse by verse; carefully noting the true, tender, or sublime, from affectation and fustian,* and he is convinced that he owes to this practice much of his *critic-craft, such as it is;*[6] so also his compatriot of a later time, Robert Louis Stevenson, roamed the country with a notebook in one pocket and a reading-book in the other, playing *the sedulous ape,* as he admits, to his masters. And I have it on the evidence of Malcolm Macmillan, that when he was in Athens he met a learned German, who, he was credibly informed by *a very amusing lady,* was *supposed to have a Homer printed on indiarubber, to read during his bath.*[7] But I grow troublesome. Let this discourse have what ends it can; the use I make of these instances is but to pretend a reason for my belief that

[1] *Life* of Francis Thompson. 7. [2] *Guy Mannering.* [3] *Memoirs.* [4] 'I tread the air and speculate on the sun.' [5] *Letters.* Camelot Ed. 227. [6] *Letters.* Scott. Lib. 66–79. [7] *Letters.* 170.

readers can read anywhere, and to entitle you to believe what I have proved to mine own satisfaction by personal experience, but could not prove to you but by these examples.

V. BOOKS ON BATTLEFIELDS

I have advanced enough instances to close my argument that books triumph over all discomforts, yet, if more are necessary, let this chapter give them. Hitherto my examples of an extraordinary kind have told mainly of discomforts, but these are toys to the stories of those who have refused to permit even warfare to arrest their reading, which I now come to relate. Some will say that those who tell such tales draw the long bow, but it is a general resolve and no private opinion how Alexander carried the *Iliad* to the wars enshrined in a precious casket; how Julius Cæsar swam with *a book in one hand, a sword in the other;*[1] how Charles the Bold had with him at the Battle of Nancy his favourite *Cyclopaedia;*[2] how Sunderland, the Cavalier and chivalrous lover of Sacharissa, *read in his tent when besieging Gloucester;*[3] how Napoleon devoured books during the lull of battles, speeding from front to front, and throwing the volumes out of the window of his carriage as he finished them, so that he left behind him *a trail like that of a paper-chase;*[4] and how, in our own time, Lawrence of Arabia went into battle (almost) reading *Aeschylus.*

Famous is that remark of Napoleon, during the Peace of Amiens, when a young English officer, named Lovelace, was presented to him: *I perceive your name, Sir,* said the First Consul, *is the same as that of the hero of Richardson's Romance!* This so pleased Hazlitt, who had the story from the young officer's uncle, that he gives it out as a prime reason for liking Buonaparte. *Here was a Consul,* he adds,[5] thrilled by the bookish allusion of a soldier who many times proved that he would not let the God of Battles hold up his engagements with the

[1] Joseph Hall, *Horae Vacivae.* [2] Elton, *Great Book-Collectors.* 95–6. [3] Cory, *Letters and Journals.* 459. [4] Ludwig, *Napoleon.* 335. [5] *The Plain Speaker.* ii, 78.

God of Books. When about to start on his campaign in Russia, Napoleon ordered the proof-sheets of a forthcoming book, about which the press censors disagreed, to be placed in his carriage, so that he might decide for himself what was to be suppressed: *Je m'ennuie en route*, he said; *je lirai ces volumes, et j'écrirai de Mayence ce qu'il y aura à faire.*[1] The volumes thus chosen *to beguile the imperial leisure* contained Madame de Deffand's letters to Horace Walpole.[2]

Sir Adam Ferguson, another bonny fighter, read *The Lady of the Lake* to himself and to his comrades in the lines at Torres Vedras; the *canto* about the stag-hunt was *the favourite*, he told Sir Walter Scott, *among the rough sons of the Fighting Third Division;*[3] *Horace* accompanied Gibbon, when a captain of Militia, *on every march, in every journey: always in my pocket, often in my hand;*[4] Stendhal, who accompanied Napoleon's armies during *the horrors of the retreat* from Moscow, in 1812, *abstracted from one of the deserted palaces* during the burning of the city a *finely bound* copy of the *Facéties* of Voltaire, which helped *to divert his mind as he lay crouched by the camp-fire through the terrible nights that followed;* but as his companions disapproved of anyone who could smile over *Akakia and Pompignan* in *such a situation*, he found it expedient to leave *the red-morocco volume behind him in the snow.*[5]

But to come to recent times: in the war of 1870 Anatole France, laying down the pen for the sword, tells how, during the battle of the 2nd of December, he was among those troops held in reserve beneath the fortress of Faisanderie, and there, amid the roar of shells which burst around and dropped into the waters of the Marne, he read through the *Silenus* of Virgil, a picture, says his biographer,[6] *which recalls Chateaubriand reading Homer beneath the walls of Thionville.* Wilfrid Scawen Blunt read Doughty's *Arabia Deserta* on his caravan journey to the Senussis in the Egyptian desert,[7] and Colonel Lawrence

[1] 'I am bored by the journey; I will read these volumes, and will write from Mayence what is to be done.' [2] Lytton Strachey, *Books and Characters*. 77. [3] Lockhart, *Life of Scott*. Chandos Ed. 197. [4] *Memoirs*. Ed. Hill. 142. [5] Lytton Strachey, *op. cit.* 260. [6] J. Lewis May, *Anatole France*. 72. [7] *My Diaries*. i, 273.

carried the *Oxford Book of English Verse*, Malory's *Morte d'Arthur*, *Aeschylus* and *Aristophanes* all through his campaign of king-making and Turk-harassing, from Jeddah to Damascus; *Shelley* also and *Wordsworth* were his desert companions, and he would read them *squatted on a prayer-rug* in his tent like an Arab reading the *Koran*,[1] whilst the Emir Feisal, whom Lawrence made King of the Hedjaz, refreshed himself between battles with the Arabic poetry of his favourite Imr el Kais, the renowned bard who lived and sang about *Camels, the desert, and love*, before the days of Mohammed.[2]

In the Great War, books played their part, being mobilised for service like other munitions of war, and where so many fought there were many readers on all fronts, in camps, canteens, messes, trenches, redoubts, fortresses; on sea and land; and not least on the *home front* during air raids and bombardments. Dr. Johnson himself, from *his abode where the eternal are*,[3] would look with joy on that heroic Mrs. Dyble, wife of a soldier and keeper of the great lexicographer's house in Gough Square, who, during a bombardment from the air by Germans, scorned to *take cover* in a cellar while her husband was *at the front*, so mounted to the immortal attic where the *Dictionary* was compiled, and there read *Boswell* until the enemy had departed.[4]

VI. BOOKS IN PRISON

Servitude, loss of liberty, imprisonment, are no such miseries as they are held to be, if books may be read or written. Many captive men can prove it. One eminent authority[5] holds that it is only in prison that *the acid test of what is readable is to be found*, whilst Gilbert Wakefield's incarceration in Dorchester Gaol opened up for him a new era of study. *I am so wholly immersed in my studies*, he told Fox, *that my spirits are entirely recovered;* and he used his confinement *to combat some of that*

[1] *With Lawrence in Arabia.* Lowell Thomas. 108. [2] *Ib.* 53–4. [3] Shelley, *Adonais.* [4] A. Edward Newton, *A Magnificent Farce.* 243–4. [5] Sir Edward Cook, *More Literary Recreations.* 1.

severe and unkindly reading, in authors of less gaiety and elegance, which, in a happier situation, would have been contended with more tardily and reluctantly, if contended with at all.[1] When Sir Thomas More was a prisoner in the Tower of London, he occupied his time reading and writing, until they *took from him all his books, ink and paper, which being done, he applied himself wholly to meditation, keeping his chamber windows fast shut, and very dark*, and when they asked him why he did so, he replied: *when all the wares are gone, the shop windows are to be shut up.*[2]

Boëthius, emprisoned at Pavia, consoled himself with the thought of his library *decked with ivory and glass: nec bibliothecae potius comtos ebore ac vitro parietes, quam tuae mentis fidem requiro* (L. i, pros. v.),[3] and with the composition of the *Consolatio*. By this means he was enabled calmly to await his cruel execution, when a cord was tied round his head until *his eyes were almost forced from their sockets*, and he was afterwards beaten *with clubs until he died.*[4] In the prison of Seville, Cervantes planned *Don Quixote*, Sir Walter Raleigh wrote his *History of the World* in the Tower of London, John Bunyan *Pilgrim's Progress* in prison at Bedford; Surrey, Lovelace, Southwell, Prior, and Leigh Hunt, all suffered imprisonment and found books and the composition of poems their sweetest consolation, and, in our own time, Oscar Wilde wrote *De Profundis* whilst he was in Reading Gaol.

The golden day for Napoleon at St. Helena, says Ludwig,[5] was that on which the ship arrived bringing him a case of books. During his exile he accumulated some 8000 volumes, which he had devoured with great speed, throwing each book on the floor as he finished it. The happiest of captive men are, indeed, those who have sought in books freedom from the prison walls. James Howell[6] when in the Fleet Prison thanked his friend, Benlowes, for enlarging his quarters *among those melancholy walls* by a gift of *a whole Isle to walk in*, meaning

[1] *Correspondence with C. J. Fox.* 102. [2] *Life.* Cresacre More. Ed. Hunter. 253. [3] 'Nor do I more miss the walls of my library, decked with ivory and glass, than the loyalty of thy heart.' [4] Langford, *Prison Books and their Authors.* 13. [5] *Napoleon.* 622. [6] *Familiar Letters.* 392.

Beaumont and Fletcher's *delicate 'Purple Island' . . . where I met with Apollo himself* (he adds) and all his daughters, with other excellent society, and where he also *stumbled upon* himself, *growing better acquainted with what I have within me and without me.*

That unfortunate parson, William Dodd, compiler of the *Beauties of Shakespeare*, found in books his greatest consolation whilst waiting for death in Newgate Prison:

> Their magic power they lose not; still the same,
> Of matchless influence in this prison-house,
> Unutterably horrid; in an hour
> Of woe, beyond all fancy's fictions drear.[1]

Lord Ferrers, the night before he was hanged for the murder of his valet, *made one of his keepers read Hamlet to him after he was in bed*, and *half an hour before the sheriffs fetched him, corrected some verses he had written in the Tower in imitation of the Duke of Buckingham's epitaph, 'dubius sed non improbus vixi'*.[2] Chastelard, that incorrigible romantic, condemned to death by Mary Stuart because of his tempestuous and inconvenient passion for her, would accept no spiritual consolation on the scaffold, but walked boldly to the block reading with great devotion Ronsard's *Hymn on Death*. Turning to the Queen's apartments, he exclaimed: *Farewell fairest and most cruel Princess in the World!* after which *he submitted to the stroke of justice, with the courage of a Rinaldo or an Orlando.*[3] When M. le Comte de Corbières, Minister of Charles X of France, was condemned to life-long imprisonment in the Château de Ham, in Picardy, Jules Janin records,[4] *il emporta dans sa prison ses grands amis: La Fontaine* and *Fénelon, Montaigne* and *Rabelais; plus tard, quand il fut libre enfin, grâce au bon roi Louis-Philippe, il revint doucement à ses livres, et ne quitta plus sa librairie.*[5]

Writers were the constant visitors of Leigh Hunt, in

[1] Dodd, *Thoughts in Prison*. [2] Walpole, *Letters*. Ed. Cunningham. iii, 314. [3] Ferriar, *Illustrations to Sterne*. 37–8. [4] *Le Livre*. 399. [5] 'He took into his prison his great friends, La Fontaine and Fénelon, Montaigne and Rabelais; later on, when at last he regained his freedom, thanks to the good King Louis-Philippe, he returned peacefully to his books, and did not again leave his library.'

Surrey Gaol, Byron, Moore, Keats, and they brought him books with which he solaced his lonely hours, turning his cell into a library, and Paul Verlaine,[1] when imprisoned at Mons, prepared for the press his *Romance sans Paroles* and taught himself English by much reading of volumes in that *Tauchnitz Collection* which has helped myriads of travellers to turn the prison of a Continental railway compartment into a pleasant study. When Oscar Wilde was in Reading Gaol Arthur Humphreys sent him books, and the companionship of these silent friends, he wrote, saved him mentally and physically, *each book was the hand of a friend, it lifted me out of the mire of despair and pain where I had for a whole year been lying.*[2]

But lest you think I am overstating my case, I will tell you a story, out of Macaulay,[3] of the opposite extreme, wherein reading proved a punishment harder to bear than the galleys. There was at one time a criminal in Italy who was condemned to choose for punishment between *Guicciardini* and the galleys. He chose the *History*. But the war of *Pisa* being too much for him, he changed his mind, and became a slave of the oar. And, in an opposite case, how the tedium of the monk in his cell has been relieved by reading is well known. That this practice has divine sanction is supported by the story of the miraculous reappearance of a lost book in the cell of Thomas à Kempis in answer to his prayer.[4] But I am o'erstepping the mark. What I am proving needs no proof. Solitude has but one greater ally than a book, namely, a self-possessed man, for I hold with Montaigne that *the greatest thing of the world, is for a man to know how to be his own.*[5] At the same time it is the prime virtue of books properly used that they readily and generously augment the most precious and inalienable of our riches, self-possession. In my few examples I have pointed somewhat at this belief, and could assemble more, but such are enough, being as good as a feast, and far better than a surfeit.

[1] *Life*, Lepelletier. Chap. xii. [2] Qt. Spencer, *Forty Years in My Bookshop*. 254–5. [3] 'Burleigh and his Times', *Essays*. [4] Lang, *Letters on Literature*. 113. [5] 'Of Solitarinesse', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 305.

VII. READING ON A JOURNEY

As travelling companions books have no corrivals. If they lacked other purpose or defence, this alone would justify them before men. How many hours they have scattered pleasantly on lone and long journeys; what limitless tedium they have relieved or circumvented, how they have filled the waking hours, or composed the weary brain for sleep, every reader can support; and it is well known that scholars and bookmen are under no compulsion to be chained to desks or libraries: desk or library is wherever they are. All ages produce instances, as Pliny, Erasmus, Petrarch, Samuel Johnson, Macaulay, John Addington Symonds.

Some have gone so far as to construct travelling libraries for themselves, like Sir Julius Cæsar, Master of the Rolls in the reign of King James I. His library went wherever he did. It was arranged in a box, shaped like a *folio volume*, covered with olive-green morocco, finely tooled in an elaborate pattern. On the inside lid was a catalogue of the forty-four books which comprised the library, together with the arms of Sir Julius and two of his three wives, with other decorations. The books were bound in vellum tooled in gold, and furnished with variously coloured ribbons, to indicate whether they were theological, philosophical, historical, or poetical works.[1] This ingenious device is now preserved in the British Museum. Napoleon had a shelf for books fitted in his coach. Pliny the Elder looked upon journeys as opportunities of escape from the tedium of affairs into the more agreeable world of books. A shorthand writer attended him in his chariot, and when in Rome he always used a 'sedan' chair so as to continue reading or dictating.[2] The passage in *Cicero* which gave Leigh Hunt most pleasure was that where he says: *books delight us at home, and are no impediment abroad;* the period being rounded off to the same purpose: *Delectant domi, non impediunt foris; peregrinantur, rusticantur.*[3] He did not care *to be anywhere without having a book at hand*, and like Dr. Okeborne in the novel *Camilla*, he

[1] Horne, *Binding of Books*. 188. [2] Pliny, *Letters*. iii, 5. [3] 'They go abroad, they go into the country.' *Pro Archia*. 7.

would *stuff the coach* or *post-chaise with them* whenever he travelled.[1]

Some dilate upon the number and kind of books suitable for a journey. Lubbock advised *two or still better three* for a long railway journey, one of them to be of *an amusing character*, so that possible tedium could be avoided by ringing the changes, the traveller thus *coming back again and again to each with renewed zest, and hour after hour would pass pleasantly away*.[2] There is some wisdom here, but it all depends on the book. The right book annihilates time wherever you are; but we are not always in luck, we cannot always guarantee the coincidence of the right book, mood and moment, so a few general experiences may be considered. In the first place, then, read what Aldous Huxley has lately written on this subject.[3] A *travelling-book* is one, he says, that you can open anywhere and be sure of finding *something interesting* which does not require *continuous attention* or *prolonged mental effort*. He gives as specimens any good anthology of verse (his own choice being Edward Thomas's *Pocket Book of Poems and Songs for the Open Air*); volumes of aphorisms, particularly *La Rochefoucauld* (a copy of which, in *sexto-decimo*, he always carries in his *upper left-hand waistcoat pocket*), or one of Nietzsche's aphoristic works; Boswell's *Johnson;* and, finally, any volume of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in the twelfth edition, which is half the old size, on india paper: *I never pass a day away from home without taking a volume with me*, he confesses; *it is the book of books*. To all of which he brings good argument, and I do not oppose him.

Nor do I argue against the taste of Petrarch, who carried with him wherever he went, by sea or land, a copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions* small enough to go into a pocket, which Father Dionisio had given him;[4] or with Dr. Johnson, who made Cocker's *Arithmetick* his companion on his tour in the Hebrides, and who explained to Boswell, *if you are to have but one book with you upon a journey, let it be a book of science*, for *when you have read through a book of entertainment*,

[1] 'My Books', *Essays*. Camelot Ed. 294. [2] *Pleasures of Life*. i, 61–2.
[3] *Along the Road*. 65–70. [4] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca*. i, 306.

you know it, and it can do no more for you; but a book of science is inexhaustible;[1] he put this theory into practice on a visit to Lord Bute's seat at *Luton Hoe* with Boswell and Mr. Charles Dilly. *He talked little to us in the carriage, being chiefly occupied in reading Dr. Watson's second volume of 'Chemical Essays', which he liked very well;* but he alternated his reading on this journey with *his own 'Prince of Abyssinia', on which he seemed to be intensely fixed.*[2] Doubtless George Moore was moved by some such idea when he made a volume of *Kant* his travelling companion, into which he would dip, even whilst waiting for his carriage to take a party of *tarts* and *mashers* to the Derby.[3] Sir Edward Cook advises[4] that if a book is to make a good travelling companion, *it must not only be readable and portable, it must also within its range be a full book,* and he hints that the selecting is not easy: *no test of real liking for a book so searching as the choice of a travelling companion.*[5] But, when they have all said their say, the best travelling-book is that which you like best. That it should be portable needs no defence, and 'tis no obstacle in these days of pocketable volumes. I know of no other rule. For myself I can read any kind of book, except *light-reading for travel* or *holiday books,* on any sort of journey, except at sea in a storm.

It is the same with all those happy readers who take the book of their choice in the place chance dictates, regardless of rules and advice. Picture Henry Crabb Robinson outside the Bury Coach on a mid-January day devouring Goethe's *'Autobiography' with great pleasure;*[6] and Madame de Sévigné reading alternately her *Breviary* and *Corneille* in the carriage on her journeys from Paris to her country seat in Brittany;[7] Dr. Johnson with *Pomponius Mela de Situ Orbis* in the stage-coach *en route* for Harwich, and *very intent upon ancient geography,* as Boswell notes;[8] Edward FitzGerald[9] communing with *Sophocles, Virgil, Don Quixote, Montaigne* and *Boccaccio,* in his fishing-boat off Lowestoft; Ramsay Macdonald passing

[1] *Tour.* Ed. Hill. *Life.* v, 138. n. [2] Boswell, *Life.* Ed. Hill. iv, 118–19. [3] *Confessions of a Young Man.* (1904.) 14. [4] *More Literary Recreations.* 22. [5] *Ib.* 2. [6] *Diary.* i, 246. [7] *Letters.* i, 150. [8] *Life.* Hill. i, 465. [9] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 101, 307.

the time with *Hazlitt* when flying from London to his native Lossiemouth; John Addington Symonds travelling from London to Florence reading *Guicciardini* all the way, regardless (says Maurice Hewlett) of the *growing attractiveness of the journey and increasing gravity of the book:* a man, he well adds, who could read that book on a journey to Italy *could read Milton on top of a motor 'bus;*[1] Symonds could have done even that, for he was a trained and hardened reader, imperturbable amid noise and movement; it was his constant habit *to do a considerable amount of hard study while travelling*, and he found it difficult to enumerate how many *heavy German and Italian books on history, biography, and criticism, how many volumes of Greek poets, and what a library of French and English authors* had been *slowly perused* by him in *railway stations, trains, steamers, wayside inns, and Alpine chalets.*[2]

Of all travel-places, a railway compartment is most familiar and accessible to modern men. Wherever there are trains there are readers. *A long railway journey affords a first-rate opportunity for reading.*[3] Even those who look upon reading as a waste of time read in railway trains, where time seems to them so plentiful that they can afford to waste it. And next to railway trains, what more appropriate place for reading than on shipboard, on a long voyage, for good 'sailors', or even bad ones when the weather is fair. *What*, asks Froude, *did passengers do on long voyages when there were no novels? They must bless the man that invented them*, he says; but, on his voyage to Australia, he re-read the classics, discovering that *in the absence of outward distractions one can understand and enjoy these finished relics of the old world.*[4] It was on his voyage to India, in 1834, that Macaulay performed the greatest of his *herculean feats as a man of books*,[5] making the passage a bookman's holiday and his ship a reader's paradise; his power of *finding amusement without companions was pretty well tried*, and it stood the trial, as he knew it would: *I read insatiably* (he tells Thomas Flower Ellis,

[1] Hewlett, *Extemporary Essays*. 119. [2] 'A Page of my Life', *Fortnightly Review*. December 1889. [3] Viscount Grey, 'Pleasure of Reading', *Fallodon Papers*. 14. [4] J. A. Froude, *Oceana*. 234. [5] Rosebery, *Appreciations and Addresses*. 146.

in a letter from Ootacamund, 1.vii.1834),[1] the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, *Virgil*, *Horace*, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, Bacon's *De Augmentis*, *Dante*, *Petrarch*, *Ariosto*, *Tasso*, *Don Quixote*, Gibbon's *Rome*, Mill's *India*, *all the seventy volumes of Voltaire*, Sismondi's '*History of France*', *and the seven thick folios of the* '*Biographia Britannica*'; and as he devoured he brooded, comparing authors and impressions of previous readings, liking the *Iliad* a little less and the *Odyssey* a great deal more than heretofore (a preference he shares with Tennyson),[2] more than ever charmed with *Horace;* not quite so much with Virgil: *The want of human character, the poverty of his super-natural machinery, struck me very strongly. Can anything be so bad as the living bush which bleeds and talks*, he asks, *or the Harpies who befoul Aeneas's dinner?* It is all, he thinks, *as extravagant as Ariosto, and as dull as Wilkie's 'Epigoniad'*. So he waxeth eloquent on this great theme, liking Virgil in his last six books, *which he had not fully corrected*, better than his first six; he liked him best on his Italian ground, preferring his local and national enthusiasm; his allusions to his own country, its history, its antiquities and its greatness; and finding over all a resemblance to Sir Walter Scott, though no true mental affinity. The *Georgics* pleased him better; the *Eclogues* best, the second and tenth best of all; but he thought the five lines beginning:

'Sepibus in nostris parvam te roscida mala'[3]

the finest lines in the Latin language, and is amused to find Voltaire pronouncing them the finest in Virgil.

Others have tasted identical delights, as Alexander never travelling without *those admirable poems* of *Homer in his company;*[4] Napoleon, making *Werter* and *Ossian* his *inseparable companions* on his voyage to Egypt;[5] Samuel Butler reading *Gibbon very carefully* on his way out to New Zealand;[6] John Wilson Croker treasuring Crabbe's *Tales* on a sea voyage.[7]

[1] *Life*. Trevelyan. i, 329–30. [2] Hallam, Lord Tennyson, *Memoir*. i, 279. [3] *Eclogue*. viii, 37. [4] Sir William Temple, *Of Poetry*. [5] Ludwig, *Napoleon*. 19. [6] *Life of Butler*. Festing Jones. i, 97. [7] *The Croker Papers*. i, 146.

Many have read with great content on lakes and rivers: *wonderful*, says A. Edward Newton,[1] *how conducive to reading I found the stuffy smoking-room of the little steamers that dart like water-spiders from one landing to another on the Italian Lakes;* picture William and Dorothy Wordsworth and Coleridge reading poems on Grasmere, *letting the boat take its own course* towards Loughrigg;[2] Samuel Pepys in his barge between London and Barne Elms with John Evelyn's *late new book against solitude;*[3] William Beckford, with Gargantuan appetite, buying Gibbon's library *to have something to read* when passing through Lausanne, shutting himself *up for six weeks from early in the morning until night, only now and then taking a ride; the people thought* him *mad*, as he *read* himself *nearly blind.*[4] *One of the slender volumes* of Matthew Arnold's verse had been Lord Morley's *cherished companion on many a journey;* it *takes little compass, and in it anybody who is for a short interval a traveller away from the hurry of the world's rough business, may well find beauty to refresh, wisdom to quiet, associations to remind and collect.*[5]

Others, again, in the opposite extreme, and they are the greater number, look upon travel as a time for light reading, or they would escape from its solitariness by means of magazines, newspapers and such like *ephemera*. To serve them, newsagents and booksellers have fixed bookstalls in railway stations, and on most harbours, piers, jetties, landing stages, used by travellers. In past times those who went on a journey carried all the books they might need with them perforce, nowadays the bookstalls are our travelling libraries, and *Tauchnitz* has girdled Europe with English literature; but whether reading be idle or studious, frivolous or profound, travel, in so mutable and kinetic an age as ours, offers a golden opportunity for the enjoyment of books or other printed matter, which, I observe, most travellers take, for few move about printless.

[1] *Amenities of Book-Collecting*. ix. [2] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*. 44. [3] *Diary*. Wheatley. vi, 337–8. [4] *William Beckford*. Melville. 180. [5] *Recollections*. i, 132.

VIII. READING AT THE TOILET

Reading during the ritual of the toilet, especially that part of it devoted to the coiffing, has a long but mostly unrecorded history. Look for examples in any barber's shop or hairdressing saloon, for they are among the traditional news-centres of our common people and the focus of gossip. It is the custom not only to exchange news and views in such resorts, but to read the papers while waiting your turn, as the saying is, or during the operation itself. Every bookman (and most ordinary men) knows how fruitful in meditation are the solitary moments of the toilet when we are faced only by our own soapy visages. George Wyndham committed Shakespeare's *Sonnets* to memory while shaving,[1] and many others have found this operation productive of literary memories, which are a kind of reading by proxy of the imagination, for to remember is as profitable as to re-read.

On Salome's dressing table in Aubrey Beardsley's picture[2] of her toilet and its ritual are copies of Zola's *Nana*, *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, *Manon Lescaut*, *Fêtes Galantes*, and the *Works* of the Marquis de Sade, which are clearly his personal choice of books for such a lady at such a time. Although Helen[3] does not read before that toilet-table which was so like the Altar of Notre Dame des Victoires, the omission was surely an oversight on the part of Beardsley, for the scene was most appropriate for dalliance with such books as he provided for Salome. She should have toyed with *Apuleius* as the coiffeur Cosmé *was caring for her scented chevelure, and with tiny silver tongs, warm from the caresses of the flame, making delicious* intelligent curls fall as lightly as a breath about her forehead and over her eyebrows, to cluster finally like tendrils round her neck; or she might have fluttered appropriately the fragrant pages of an eighteenth-century edition of *Dorat* as her *three favourite girls, Pappelarde, Blanchemains, and Loreyne,* attended her with *perfume and powder in delicate flacons and frail cassolettes, and held in porcelain jars the ravishing paints prepared*

[1] *George Wyndham: Recognita.* Gatty. 2–3. [2] Wilde, *Salome.* [3] Beardsley, *Under the Hill.*

by Chatelaine for those cheeks and lips that had grown a little pale with anguish of exile. She might have assessed the shameless confidences of *Aretino* as her *three favourite boys, Claud, Clair, and Sarrisine, stood amorously about with salver, fan and napkin,* and *Millamant held a slight tray of slippers,* and *Minette some tender gloves,* and *La Popelinière—mistress of the robes—a frock of yellow and white,* and *La Zambinella the jewels,* and *Florizel some flowers,* and *Amadour a box of various pins,* and *Vadius a box of sweets;* whilst her *doves, ever in attendance, walked about the room that was panelled with the gallant paintings of Jean Baptiste Dorat, and some dwarfs and doubtful creatures sat here and there, lolling out their tongues, pinching each other and behaving oddly enough.*[1] But I am forth of my subject again and must return from this baroque paradise.

More to the point is Mrs. Balfour's account of a lady who was reading to a party of two or three the seventh volume of *Clarissa, whilst her maid curled her hair, and the poor girl let fall such a shower of tears upon her lady's head, that she was forced to send her out of the room to compose herself.* On being asked why she cried, she answered, *to see such goodness in distress,* whereupon *a lady followed her out of the room, and gave her a crown for that answer.*[2] Or there is that classical reference to Pliny the Elder having books read to him while he was being *rubbed and wiped in the bath.*[3] Samuel Pepys records (see his *Diary* under December 22nd, 1662) that having reached home and *presently shifted* himself, *so had the barber come, and my wife and I to read* Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* which that night he had brought home for her from St. Paul's Churchyard.

IX. READING AT MEALTIMES

Reading at mealtimes has innumerable precedents, and much may be said in support of it, in spite of those who would hold fast to the conviction that eating is an art in itself which tolerates no rival; or those others, more medically disposed,

[1] Beardsley, *Under the Hill.* 14–15. [2] *Correspondence of Richardson.* Barbauld. iv, 305. [3] Pliny, *Letters.* iii, 5.

who give out that any exigent concern at table, by obtruding itself upon ingestion, which is the main object, sets up a disaffection of the inward parts and ends in dyspepsias and other gastric derangements. But their arguments are none too sound, and, if true, would rule out conversation and music, and all those other amenities which add so much to the pleasure of dining; this parallel I would urge because it is well known that content of mind is a notable peptonizer, and it would follow that whatsoever is conducive to it, whether it be music, talk or books, may accompany any feast. But the dissenters need no confutation, for every reader can support me out of his own experience, yet I shall cite a few precedents to confound the captious and console the rest.

Dr. Johnson, Byron, Charles Lamb, Shelley, Leigh Hunt, and, in our own day, Robert Louis Stevenson and Bernard Shaw, are all confessed table-readers. In past times it was the delight of cultured banqueters to have reading aloud numbered among the courses: *at Favorinus's table*, Aulus Gellius records,[1] *when he dined with friends, there was usually read either an old song of one of the lyric poets, or something from history, now in Greek and now in Latin*, as on that *mild day in Autumn* when he and Julius Celsinus were *entertained very pleasantly with vegetables and fruits* and the reading at table of the *Alcestis* of Laevius, by Julius Paulus, at his little place *in agro Vaticano*.[2] Peter Daniel Huet had someone to read to him at mealtimes: *neither the heat of youth, nor a multiplicity of business, nor the love of company, nor the hurry of the world, has ever been able to moderate my love of study;*[3] our own High Priest of Bibliophiles, Richard de Bury, *every day while at table would have a book read to him, unless some special guest were present;*[4] whilst Carneades, that *laborious and diuturnal soldier of Wisdom's*, even at the age of ninety years, Quintus Valerius Maximus relates,[5] *so addicted himself to the works of learning*,

[1] *Attic Nights*. Loeb Ed. ii, 22. Favorinus was a philosopher of the time, born in Gaul; he was greatly admired by Gellius. [2] *Attic Nights*. Loeb Ed. xix, 7. [3] Qt. *Book-Lover's Ench.* 94. [4] *Philobiblon*. King's Classics Ed. Pref. xi. [5] *Romae Antiquae Descriptio*. English Ed. (1678.) 368.

that when he sat down to eat, busie in his thoughts, he would forget to reach his meat, and would have starved had not Melissa, *whom he kept as a Wife, fed him.*

'Tis with us as it was of old, with this difference: books being more easily got at, more makes them accessories to the feast. I dare boldly say that few of our later bookmen would scruple to feed at once mind and body; most indulge thus with great content and no hurt. I could speak for myself in this case, for it has always been my habit to read during meals unless inclination bade me engage in talk, and I have no acquaintance with dyspepsia—but I must on to my instances. Trevelyan knew of no society that Macaulay *would have preferred at breakfast or at dinner to the company* of *Sterne, Fielding, Horace Walpole,* or *Boswell,* and *there were many less distinguished authors with whose productions he was very well content to cheer his repasts;* not even a Brillat-Savarin could make eating predominate over reading for Macaulay, who lived to read and read to live. All books, however, were not appropriate to any meal: *Henderson's* Iceland was *a favourite breakfast book;* but *some books which I never should dream of opening at dinner please me at breakfast and vice versa.*[1] He was fastidious and a gourmet, if voracious, walking with the heavies, breakfasting with the dull, and (*dined at my inn, reading Cooper's 'Pathfinder'*)[2] dining with the light; but, appetite still unsatisfied, he complained that *except while dressing and undressing* he got *no reading at all.*[3]

Charles Lamb found *Milton* a good supper book. *If,* he wrote to Coleridge, *you find the Miltons in certain parts dirtied and soiled with a crumb of right Gloucester blacked in the candle (my usual supper), or peradventure a stray ash of tobacco wafted into the crevices, look to that passage more especially: depend upon it, it contains good matter.*[4] William Hazlitt sat down to a volume of the *New Eloise,* at the Inn at Llangollen, *over a bottle of sherry and a cold chicken;*[5] Leigh Hunt would read the booksellers' catalogues at tea or dinner, ticking favourite books and enjoying *the pure imagination of buying them, the*

[1] *Life.* Trevelyan. ii, 394. [2] *Ib.* 193. [3] *Ib.* 68. [4] *Letters.* Ed. Lucas. i, 255. [5] *On Going a Journey.*

possibility being out of the question;[1] Benjamin Disraeli read at mealtimes, and in his old age at Hughenden brought a book to table and read for ten minutes after every course;[2] Campbell confesses that *reading Homer at breakfast has become, by long habit, necessary* to his *existence;*[3] Stevenson read Aikman's *Annals* at breakfast and *almost forgot* to drink his tea and eat his egg;[4] but of all these instances I admire most J. A. Symonds' relation of how he enjoyed *nothing more* than *to sit in a bar room among peasants, carters, and postillions, smoking with a glass of wine beside him, and a stiff work on one of the subjects* he was bound to *get up*,[5] because it reminds me how I once saw Cecil Chesterton standing in the middle of a crowded London tap-room with a tankard of ale in one hand and a book in the other, chuckling over the page, unconscious of the din and reek of the place.

X. READING IN BED

But how many are there who neither wait to get up to read nor go to bed without reading; a notable instance is the Oxford scholar in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales:*

> For him was lever han at his beddes heed
> Twenty bokes, clad in black or reed,
> Of Aristotle and his philosophy,
> Than robes riche, or fithele, or gay sautyre.

Certain philosophers have even gone to bed to think. Descartes used to lie in bed sixteen hours every day, curtains drawn, windows shut, imagining that he had more command over his mind in that situation; and some others, as Malebranche and Mezerai, meditated and studied with drawn blinds or by candlelight.[6] Many readers favour the night for the pursuit of their passion, the record for this kind of reading being held, according to Osler,[7] by Sir Kenelm Digby, but I doubt whether he was a greater practitioner in this art than

[1] *Retrospective Review.* 1837. [2] Disraeli, *Maurois.* Chap. x. [3] Qt. R. N. Carew Hunt, *The Times.* 17.ix.1930. [4] *Letters.* Ed. Colvin. i, 17. [5] 'A Page of My Life', *Fortnightly Review.* December 1889. [6] Buck, *Anecdotes.* i, 247. [7] *Life of Osler.* Cushing. ii, 22.

Liu Hsun,[1] that notable Chinese student who was so enamoured of his books that he scarcely ever left them; he would read *all night*, and to make sure that he did not fall asleep, he had *a lighted twist of hemp arranged in such a way as to burn his hair if he began to nod from drowsiness*.[2] Some are more temperate, reading a little every night before sleep, as a *popular* Lord Mayor of Dublin, in *Yeats*,[3] who bragged *that he never went to bed at night without reading at least twelve pages of 'Sappho'*; but on the other hand, some resent the overtures of unconsciousness, warding off sleep as they would an enemy, as the poet, Lionel Johnson,[4] who would rather read than sleep,

> Sleep wins me not: but from his shelf
> Brings me each wit his very self;
> Beside my chair the great ghosts throng,
> Each tells his story, sings his song:
> And in the ruddy fire I trace
> The curves of each *Augustan* face.

Yet whatever they say, *all good and true book-lovers practise the pleasing and improving avocation of reading in bed*.[5]

So great is the inclination, which many account a bad habit, that some would have special books, imagined to be more suitable than others, set apart as bed-books; these they claim should be soothing, passive, meditative, wooing the imagination gently, sedative, calming the mind and so composing the body and spirit for sleep; and our late Regius Professor of Medicine at Oxford, Sir William Osler,[6] a stout bookfellow, reckons up another advantage of bed-reading, in a learned lecture of his not long since: *With half an hour's reading in bed every night as a steady practice*, he claims, *the busiest man can get a fair education before the plasma sets in the perigangliomic spaces of his grey cortex*. But they miss the point. Your true bed-readers seek neither to cure insomnia nor to educate themselves: they read for reading's sake, and would make wakefulness a virtue, to be cultivated, not, within

[1] Died A.D. 521. [2] Giles, *Chinese Biog. Dict.* 506. [3] *The Trembling of the Veil.* 114. [4] 'Oxford Nights', *Poetical Works.* 100. [5] Eugene Field, *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* 31. [6] *Life.* Cushing. ii, 185.

reason, denied: *Let sleep go. Let the morrow's duties go. Let health, prudence, and honour go. The bedside book for me is the book that will longest keep me awake.*[1] Reading against insomnia comes under the medicinal value of books, and I shall only say here that it is no more than an expedient and often a pain. Dr. Johnson *lamented much* his *inability to read during his* last *hours of restlessness; I used formerly*, he said, *when sleepless in bed, to read like a Turk.*[2] But his desire was to sleep, not to read.

The virtue of bed-reading is that it enables us *to extract the last drop of sweetness from this delightful hour*, and to do so *we must be conscious of our bed as well as of our book;*[3] such reading demands an acute consciousness, for it is an experience, none the less because we end as though *drowsed with the fume of poppies*. For reading as an opiate, then, seek elsewhere in this treatise; here are recorded only specimens of those whose bed-reading is for delight, as Charles Dickens when the other boys played *sat on his bed, reading for dear life;*[4] as Leigh Hunt read *Hudibras, at one desperate plunge*, when laid in bed with two scalded legs;[5] as Henry Bradshaw lay in bed so late to finish the first volume of *Alton Locke*, that he was *up only just in time for chapel;*[6] or as Herbert Spencer,[7] when a youth, would read in bed forbidden stories, the *Castle of Otranto, Mrs. Redcliffe* and the like, until the birds sang in the morning; and as in his old age he would gloat on the memory of how his mother crept into his room to see if the candle was out, and how he was not to be baulked of his *midnight gratification, for close to my bed was a fixed corner cupboard; and habitually, when I heard her steps on the stairs, I leapt out of bed, put the candle still burning into this cupboard, got into bed again and pretended to be asleep, until she, thinking all was as it should be, retired. Whereupon I brought out the candle and resumed my reading.* This boyish adventure is very much to the point of my argument, for fastidious bed-readers will read the books of their choice and for their own delectation, as Chaucer

[1] J. C. Squire, 'Reading in Bed', *Life at the Mermaid*. 119. [2] *Life*. iv, 207. [3] Hope Mirrlees, 'Bedside Books', *Life and Letters*. December 1928. [4] *David Copperfield*. [5] *Life*. Monkhouse. 35. [6] *Memoir of Henry Bradshaw*. 39. [7] *Autobiography*. i, 77–8.

when he anticipated Herbert Spencer by choosing a Romance, although his aim was to entertain uninvited wakefulness:

> So when I saw I might not slepe,
> Til now late, this other night,
> Upon my bedde I sat upright,
> And bad oon reche me a boke,
> A romaunce, and he hit me took
> To rede and dryve the night away.[1]

There are, however, in spite of what I have said, certain books which by general consent and usage have come to be reckoned more appropriate bed-books than others; but any catalogue I could make would be prejudiced, exclusive of all taste but mine own, or, if more catholic, so inclusive as to be useless as a guide to those about to read in bed. Yet although it is plain that reading in bed is an inborn faculty and natural to most bookmen, the choice of book blending curiously with the mood, there are doubtless principles underlying the choice, and if, as I have said, consciousness of the pleasure is a *sine qua non*, that pleasure must not be so intense as to banish the desire to sleep irrecoverably. Bed-books must not disturb or rasp the nerves, and sleep being ultimately necessary, they should lull the mind into an exquisite slothfulness, fusing body and brain into a glow, with sleep waiting apart to be wooed willingly. The character of a bed-book must thus *approximate*, as all art in the opinion of Pater, *to the condition of music*, which I plainly prove from the words of Hope Mirrlees: *Let our book have some of the qualities of music. But they must be the qualities that music has for the unmusical, what we want are dreams, and sound without sense.*[2]

Of all books, then, I take that kind which we call rambling and discursive to be the best; and in this I find myself in agreement with Squire, who prescribes that they shall be neither *boring* nor too *exciting;* interesting on every *page but dramatic nowhere*, with *a stream of event but no definite break*,[3] in short, I say, works of culture or urbanity which may be opened and enjoyed at any page, as Boswell's *Johnson*, Burton's *Anatomy*

[1] *Book of the Duchess.* 44. [2] 'Bedside Books', *Life and Letters.* December 1928. [3] 'Reading in Bed', *Life at the Mermaid.* 118.

of Melancholy, the *Reliquiae Wottonianae*, *The Doctor*, by Southey, Walpole's *Letters*, Pepys' *Diary*, Greville's *Journals*, *The Complete Angler*, Montaigne's *Essays*, Evelyn's *Diary*, the *Religio Medici*, the *Works* of Francis Rabelais, *Tristram Shandy*, *Don Quixote*, *Gil Blas*, the *Decameron*, the *Essays* of Charles Lamb, Plutarch's *Lives;* all manner of *analecta:* the *Deipnosophists* of Athenaeus and the *Attic Nights* of Aulus Gellius, Edward FitzGerald's *Polonius*, Frederick Locker's *Patchwork*, Southey's *Omniana* and *Commonplace Books*, and the *Anecdotes* of William King, Joseph Spence, John Nichols and William Beloe; the *Table Talk* of Samuel Rogers, Leigh Hunt, Coleridge; *A Bookman's Budget*, by Austin Dobson; *Walpoliana;* and such mines of curious knowledge as the compendious entertainments of those early collectors and classifiers of knowledge who preceded our more exact observers and recorders, as, and I give only a few of my own favourites, the *Anthropometamorphosis* of John Bulwer and Lovell's *Panzoologicomineralogia*, the *Living Library* of Camerarius in John Molle's translation, and Hakewill's *Apologie*. I would include all genial and urbane epistles: Lady Mary Montague's, Charles Lamb's, Edward FitzGerald's, William Cowper's, and John Keats's; the *Epistolae Ho-Elianae; The Groombridge Diary* and *Pages from the Journals* of Mark Rutherford; Torr's *Small-Talk at Wreyland*, Doran's *Table Traits* (and his other chatterbooks), Captain Gronow's *Reminiscences*—but there is no end to them. And for poetry, what richer bed-books than the *Golden Treasury* or the *Oxford Book*, mines of purest English Song the sweetest in the World, our best product, our true soul's viaticum; with such books, in health or sickness, going to bed, or staying in bed perforce, becomes a holiday, upon which we may thank God for such a gift: *Deus nobis haec otia fecit.*[1]

Not without good reason, then, does Maurice Hewlett set down in *The Limits of the Readable*,[2] that if ever he took a book to bed, which he ingenuously confesses he never did, it would be of good-humoured *Essays:* not Hazlitt's—*Hazlitt*

[1] 'God procured for us this leisure.' *Virgil. Ec.* i, 6. [2] *Extemporary Essays.* 120.

is for youth, which can stand his ill-temper, perhaps be stimulated by it; but rather *Lamb*, a volume of the *Tatler*, or Bagehot (*You can pick him up where you will and find him good-humoured*); and Montaigne—*a perfect lucky-bag*, but neither he nor I need much labour to prove this, for well have the wise ones of all times known similar delights. Sir Kenelm Digby records in a letter to Edward, Earl of Dorset,[1] how, being *newly gotten into Bed* with the *Religio Medici*, he rejoiced that he *could easily persuade* that *good-natured creature* to be his *Bedfellow; to wake me*, he saith, *as long as I had any edge to entertaine myself with the delights I sucked from so noble a conversation. And truly, my lord*, he goes on, *I closed not my eyes till I had enricht myself with* (*or at least exactly surveyed*) *all the treasures that are lapped up in the folds of these few sheets;* and with what delight must that *very worthy, industrious, and curious*[2] Mr. Pepys have recorded how on December 12th, 1660, *home and to bed, reading myself to sleep, while the wench sat mending my breeches by my bedside*,[3] or again, cheery upon the thought of good business with T. Trice, he *lay reading* '*Hobbs his Liberty and Necessity*', *a little but very shrewd piece, and so to sleep*.[4]

Henry Crabb Robinson read *The Doctor* and *Crabbe's Life* in bed before six in the morning;[5] Voltaire was a confirmed lie-a-bed; when it was cold he passed most of the day in bed, arising only when the weather was fine, when he walked in his garden, or took an airing in his coach; his bed, says Dom Chandon,[6] *was always strewed with books*, and beside it an elegant table on which was water, *café-au-lait*, an inkstand and some slips of blank paper, to mark the pages he wished to read again or on which to make observations. He wrote in the margins of all his books, criticising, commenting, blaming, and praising, but he rarely read a work through, except when deeply interested. Diana of Poitiers rose at six, bathed in rain-water, rode a league or so and returned to bed, where she lay reading until midday.[7] Porson, Eugene Field gives out,[8]

[1] *Observations upon Religio Medici.* (1644.) 3-4. [2] Evelyn, *Diary.* 456. [3] Pepys, *Diary.* i, 307. [4] *Ib.* ii, 140. [5] *Diary.* (1872.) 212. [6] *Memoirs of Voltaire.* 1786. [7] Bushnell, *Trans. Bib. Soc.* December 1926. 286. [8] *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* 35.

was a veritable slave to the habit of reading in bed; he would lie down with *books piled around him, light his pipe and start in upon some favourite volumes,* with *a jug of liquor at hand.*

Montaigne's *Essays* and Howell's *Letters* were Thackeray's bed-books: *if I wake at night I have one or the other of them,* he said, *to prattle me to sleep again;*[1] Wycherley never closed his eyes at night without dipping into the pages of *Montaigne, Rochefoucauld, Seneca* or *Gracian;*[2] Edward FitzGerald told Frederic Tennyson[3] that he had *read the sixth Book of Lucretius in bed;* he had not looked into it for more than a year, but *took it up by mistake for one of Swift's dirty volumes; and, having got into bed with it, did not care to get out to change it;* and on another occasion he confesses to Bernard Barton that *this morning* (8.iv.1848) *I read some of my old friend Sir Charles Grandison in bed;*[4] Sir Walter Raleigh lay in bed of a morning reading *Trollope;*[5] Francis Jenkinson, the Cambridge University Librarian, read Mark Pattison's *Memoirs* until 12.30 a.m. and became so absorbed that he continued reading them in bed until two o'clock.[6] *I invariably read in bed of a night,* Arnold Bennett records, *unless,* he adds, *paying in my temples the price of excess;* he once took *Montaigne* with him for a bed-book, whilst on a holiday, but, instead of the essayist, he found himself reading *a verbatim account of a poisoning trial in the Paris 'Journal'.*[7]

But there is as much diversity of taste here as elsewhere, and even Squire, who, as I have shown, prescribes those long still books which are the true bed-books, is himself a heretic, for he *shamelessly* confesses that however tired he might be, and *the whole contents of the British Museum at call* from his bed, he would *ask for a shocker.*[8] And here I consider, in conclusion, that there is no difference of opinion upon the pleasure of reading in bed, and that the true state of the question is only this, that the practice hath many inconveniences, mischances,

[1] Qt. Jerrold, *Autolycus of the Bookstalls.* 158. [2] J. Roger Rees, *Diversions of a Bookworm.* 23–4. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 206. [4] *Some New Letters of Edward FitzGerald.* 158. [5] *Letters.* i, 272. [6] *Francis Jenkinson.* Stewart. 12. [7] 'Holiday Reading', *Books and Persons.* 159. [8] 'Reading in Bed', *Life at the Mermaid.* 119.

calamities, such as injury to eyesight, destruction of the will to sleep, and danger of fire through mishap to candle or lamp. These be mere diversions, outworn toys of imagination, for I have yet to hear of any coming to hurt by reading in bed; but the opposition is as insignificant as the risks are negligible, and on that note I may end, *audita querela*, having investigated the objections.

PART XIII

THE INFLUENCE OF BOOKS

I. GENERAL INFLUENCES CONSIDERED

How far the power of books extends; whether they cause changes in the condition of all men and women who read them, or whether all books or only some have this faculty, is a curious problem, and worthy to be considered; so, for the better understanding of it, I will make a brief generalisation of the nature and character of the effects (the exaltations, perturbations of the spirit of men), wherein they manifest themselves, in what manner and to what end. That they have the faculty to move men I need not further argue, though more evidence will be adduced as this dissertation unfolds itself; suffice it that, as all know, they can seize the reader

> As tempests seize a ship, and bear him on
> With a wild joy,[1]

although, I am well aware, most men are immune from such direct influence, being moved only at second hand, or third, or more remotely still, by the slow absorption of bookish effect from age to age. Some, on the other hand, believe, as Mark Pattison,[2] that writers, *with a professional tendency to magnify their office, have always been given to exaggerate the effect of printed words*, and whilst admitting that *there are examples of thought having been influenced by books*, he holds that such books have been *scientific, not rhetorical*. That this species of argument may be extended, I have no doubt, and I could amplify it with observations delivered by others much to the same end; but in the main they are erroneous, not such as are eminently fair, as you may read apart in this section of *Influences*, although I hold it opportune to be considered that

[1] Alexander Smith, *A Life-Drama*. [2] *Milton*. 67.

it was *gunpowder*, as he[1] argues, not *Don Quixote*, which destroyed the *age of chivalry*.

I am, of course, not ignorant of the fact that writers are prejudiced in favour of their trade: their predisposition in this business is notorious; they are favourably placed for its propagation, and 'tis not likely they should cry stinking fish. Yet their assessment is not unreasonable, for if words have not always the sudden precision of gunfire, they strike deeper, and their slow effect reveals permutations more durable than the percussions of physical force. It is an old saying that *a blow with a word strikes deeper than a blow with a sword*:[2] how much deeper a blow with a book. Let us argue, therefore, that books are not always a sole or even a direct influence, and that their effect upon crowds is by diffusion rather than by knocks. So gradual their insinuation among masses of men that, as Sir James Frazer advises,[3] although *two or three generations of literature may do more to change thought than two or three thousand years of traditional life*, this change is effected only among those who come under the direct influence of books, *the mass of people who do not read books remain unaffected by the mental revolution wrought by literature*, so that, he gives out, *in Europe at the present day the superstitious beliefs and practices which have been handed down by word of mouth are generally of a far more archaic type than the religion depicted in the most ancient literature of the Aryan race*.

Some few are so bold as to argue that although men are *qualified for their work by knowledge*, they are also *negatively qualified for it by their ignorance*;[4] and this same observer holds that *the last generation of English country aristocracy was particularly rich in characters whose unity and charm was dependent upon the limitations of their culture, which would have been entirely altered, perhaps not for the better, by simply knowing a science or a literature that was closed to them*.[5] Yet whole eras are changed by books, even the manners and behaviour of

[1] Pattison, *Milton*. 190. [2] 'Leviter volant, graviter vulnerant.' Bernardus, Qt. *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) i, 391. [3] Preface to First Ed. *Golden Bough*. (1911.) xii. [4] Hamerton, *Intellectual Life*. 77. [5] *Ib*. 76.

those who cannot read, for, as Mathias reasons it, and many others uphold, *literature, well or ill conducted, is the Great Engine by which all civilized states must ultimately be supported or overthrown.*[1] I shall not here impose more than one instance on a matter of such general acceptance, namely, that revolution in the spirit of man, the overthrowing of the Dark Ages, which was hastened by the rediscovery of the ancient writers, because the best minds of those times were moved with *a spirit of tremulous delight, of awe and ecstasy*, when they read *the recaptured, the resurgent classics of Greece and Rome.*[2]

Having thus cleared the way, I may now advance that books, in the main and proper operation of their influence, affect *dissimilar parts:* those which we call *spiritual* and *instrumental*, or *inward* and *outward*. The office of the first or *inward* part functions by nutrition, the substantial act spiritually conceived of an organical body by which it is nourished, augmented, fed as a body is fed, to beget, by continuous rejuvenation of the tissues, another like unto itself, but remaining itself, by an act of transubstantiation, for as Hamerton holds, although *a thousand times more difficult to observe*, there is *a sort of intellectual chemistry which is quite as marvellous as material chemistry* which *affects the whole character of the mind.*[3] This *inward* part is variously named soul, spirit, life-force, vital energy, the unconscious, and the like, and is variously and incontinently dilated upon by all and sundry: doctors of divinity, philosophers, theologians, physicists, psychologists, biologists, evolutionists, evangelists, revivalists; Presbyters, Roman Catholics, Quakers, Muggletonians, Anglicans, New Connectionists, Salvationists, Plymouth Brethren, Shakers, Fundamentalists, Peculiar People, Second Adventists, Theosophists, Christian Scientists, and Spiritualists; Jews, Buddhists, Taoists, Zoroastrians, Mohammedans, Confucians, and so *ad infinitum*, or seeming so; the parties concerned are innumerable almost, and scattered over the face of the earth, far and near, and so have been in all precedent ages, from the beginning of the world to these times, of all sorts and conditions.

[1] *Pursuits of Literature*. 13th Ed. 162. [2] Lionel Johnson, *Post Liminium*. 211. [3] *Intellectual Life*. 74.

The *outward* part is the brain. It lies in the upper region, and is, as Robert Burton so well says,[1] *a soft, marrowish, and white substance, engendered of the purest part of seed and spirits, included by many skins, and seated within the skull or brain-pan;* and he claims, as many others do, both past and present, that it is *the most noble organ under heaven, the dwelling-house and seat of the soul, the habitation of wisdom, memory, judgement, reason, and in which man is most like unto God,* and for that reason nature hath covered it with a skull of hard bone, and two skins or membranes, for the better protection of so curious and ingenious an engine. Later writers would not all go so far with him in these precedent matters, whether the brain is the noblest organ under heaven, the seat of the soul, or even that point at which man is most like unto God. But no rule is so general which admits not some exception; and to this therefore which hath been hitherto said there are many contingent diversions and deflexions, even from his contention, so stiffly upheld by the orthodox, that it is the habitation of wisdom, memory, judgement, reason, and the like, these being the constituents of the understanding, by which, as Burton again (after Melancthon),[2] *we perceive, remember and judge, as well singulars as universals, having certain innate notices or beginnings of acts, a reflecting action, by which it judgeth of his own doings, and examines them.*

Out of this definition, which he says is *the power of the soul* working through the cerebral organ, pragmatical inferences may be deduced more consistent with later notions. Some reckon, as D. H. Lawrence, that the brain is but the *terminal instrument of the dynamic consciousness, a dynamo and accumulator, accumulating mechanical force* which it subjects to *certain machine-principles called ideals or ideas;*[3] which supports Bergson, who holds that the intelligence, *considered in what seems to be its original feature,* is *the faculty of manufacturing artificial objects, especially tools to make tools, and of indefinitely varying the manufacture.*[4] How far the process continues and is related to will, conscience, instinct, need not detain me, for

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) i, 176. [2] *Ib.* i, 188. [3] *Psychoanalysis.* 121–3. [4] *Creative Evolution.* 146.

there are diverse opinions upon it, and of all these I should more aptly expand, but my theme will not permit. One of such tools only I will point out, as more necessary to my following discourse. It is that agent or tool which is called the wit of man, acumen or subtlety, sharpness of invention, which he doth invent of himself without a teacher, or learns anew from books or teachers who are the transmitters of book knowledge, abstracting those intelligible species from the phantasy, or directing them from the experience to the understanding; phantasy, or imagination, being an inner sense which, Burton saith, *doth more fully examine the species perceived by common sense, of things present or absent, and keeps them longer, recalling them to mind again, or making them new of his own.*[1]

In poets and other writers it forcibly works, as appears by innumerable fictions, theories, anticks, images, as Ovid's House of Sleep;[2] *Psyche's* Palace in *Apuleius;*[3] Swift's *Lilliput* and *Brobdingnag;*[4] the *Palace of Art* in Tennyson; More's *Utopia*, Harrington's *Oceana*, Butler's *Erewhon*, and William Morris his *Nowhere;* and all those dreams, phantasies, reveries, imaginings, which go into books and govern the mind of man, or at least should do, but in brutes it hath no existence, *ratio brutorum* being all the reason they have. Poets, story-tellers, philosophers, teachers, conceivers and makers of books are the sensitive points of the brain carrying its imaginative concepts to other brains; they are, as Thoreau boldly claims, an *irresistible aristocracy* exerting a greater *influence on mankind* than kings or emperors.[5]

They are the lines of communication between the insubstantial pageant of the world and that other world of dreams, that *Promised Land*, *City of the Sun*, *Utopia*, which is our immemorial ligation of sense and spirit; *for it is a fact of Nature that the soul is raised by true sublimity, it gains a proud step upwards, it is filled with joy and exultation, as though itself had produced what it hears.*[6]

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) i, 182. [2] *Metam.* xi, 592 *seq.* [3] *Metam.* Bk. v. [4] *Gulliver.* Pts. i. and ii. [5] *Walden.* Scott Lib. 101. [6] Longinus, *The Sublime.* Trans. Prickard. 11–12.

What were our wanderings if without your goals
As air and light, the glory ye dispense
Becomes our being—who of us can tell
What he had been, had Cadmus never taught
The art that fixes into form the thought—
Had Plato never spoken from his cell,
Or his high harp blind Homer never strung?
Kinder all earth hath grown since genial Shakespeare sung![1]

I go into my library, and all history rolls before me. I breathe the morning air of the world while the scent of Eden's roses yet lingered in it, while it vibrated only to the world's first brood of nightingales, and to the laugh of Eve. I see the pyramids building; I hear the shoutings of the armies of Alexander; I feel the ground shake beneath the march of Cambyses. I sit as in a theatre—the stage is time, the play is the play of the world.[2] Or again, the people we meet in books are more real than our own acquaintances, and they command more of our allegiance. *The man in the street,* says Chesterton, *has more memories of Dickens, whom he has not read, than of Marie Corelli, whom he has,* and in those days when the novels of Dickens were coming out in monthly parts, *people talked as if real life were itself the interlude between one issue of 'Pickwick' and another;*[3] his *dear Sévigné* was much more to Edward FitzGerald than *most friends,*[4] and he heard Hamlet, Macbeth, and Shylock talking in his room, *all alive about* him;[5] so also Mary Coleridge, when reading *Plato,* found it difficult to believe that Socrates was *not in the next room.*[6] *I love more,* said Sterne, *the peerless knight of La Mancha, and would actually have gone farther to have paid a visit to him than to the greatest hero of antiquity.*[7]

Thus books, and the writers of them and the brain which first perceives what should be in them, are most truly tools, instruments, agents of imagination for moulding the wit of man or rousing his spirit. *The art of the pen,* as George Meredith well observes, *is to rouse the inward vision,* to *spring imagination with a word or phrase.*[8] Instances and examples to

[1] Bulwer-Lytton, 'The Souls of Books'. [2] Alexander Smith, 'Books and Gardens', *Dreamthorp.* 248. [3] *Charles Dickens.* 100. [4] *Letters to Fanny Kemble.* 106. [5] *Ib.* 68. [6] *Gathered Leaves.* 11. [7] *Tristram Shandy.* i, x. [8] *Diana of the Crossways.* 137.

evince the truth of this aphorism are common amongst those treatises which so many have writ and in the numerous memoirs and memoranda of bookfolk, for all that civilized men are to-day is enshrined in books, and the words which are their constituents are the quintessence of our ideas, dreams, actions, desires, greater in this essence than in the diffused life out of which it is made: *no woman gives us the radiant dream that lurks beneath the word Woman; no wine realises the intoxication imagined by the word Wine; no gold, pale gold or dusky gold, gives out the fulguration of the word Gold; there is no perfume that our deceived nostrils find equal to the word Perfume; no blue, no red that figures the tints with which our imaginations are coloured; all is too little for the word All.*[1] Well may Sir William Temple feel no wonder that the famous Dr. Harvey, when reading *Virgil, should sometimes throw him down upon the table, and say he had a devil;* or that Meric Casaubon *should find such charming pleasures and emotions as he describes* in *Lucretius;* or that *so many should cry, and with downright tears, at some tragedies of Shakespeare,* and that others should feel *turns and curdling of their blood* upon reading certain poems, as Octavia swooned at the recital of the sixth *Aeneid.*[2] *If,* says Leigh Hunt, *a passage in 'King Lear' brings the tears into our eyes, it is real as the touch of a sorrowful hand. If the flow of a song of Anacreon's intoxicates us, it is as true to a pulse within us as the wine he drank.*[3]

Books have made us what we are. *The use of letters,* says Gibbon,[4] *is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge and reflection;* Caliban confesses as much when he says:

> Remember
> First to possess his books; for without them
> He 's but a sot, as I am.[5]

Without the aid of books memory is soon dissipated, and the ideas entrusted to her charge corrupted. No longer supplied with models or materials, the mind forgets its powers, the

[1] Emile Hannequin, *Pastels in Prose.* Trans. Merrill. 203. [2] Sir W. Temple, 'Of Poetry'. [3] *The Indicator.* i, 64. [4] *Decline and Fall.* ix. [5] *The Tempest.* iii, 2.

judgement becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid and irregular. Gibbon goes on to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the *illiterate* peasant: *The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses but very little his fellow-labourer the ox in the exercise of his mental faculties.* He notes like differences between nations, and concludes that without some *species of writing no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.* Samuel Butler would take us yet farther, for he holds that without literature *the development of civilisation would have been impossible.*[1] Books thus may well be the elixir of civilization, for without them we are as the beasts that perish; their power includes and transcends all our most admirable faculties; in support of which I shall now parade some instances.

II. THE MIGHT OF WORDS

In this place we must consider first by what power books build and destroy, for they can build castles in the air, and put the foundations of them deep in the earth; and they can knock down what they have built; they can represent palaces, temples, armies, heroes, prodigies, and other admirable or strange objects to men's eyes; create visions, savours, tastes, deceive all the senses, and produce miraculous alterations, as all know. *Consider whether any Rune in the wildest imagination of Mythologist ever did such wonders as, on the actual firm earth, some books have done! Who built St. Paul's Cathedral?* demands Carlyle,[2] and he answers, *it was that divine Hebrew Book, the word partly of the man Moses, an outlaw tending his Midianitish herds, four thousand years ago, in the wilderness of Sinai!* Whitman's *Leaves of Grass tumbled the world down* for Robert Louis

[1] *Note Books.* 96. [2] *Heroes and Hero Worship.* (1841.) 259.

Stevenson.[1] When Petrarch gave a copy of St. Augustine's *Confessions* to a friend he claimed that *this book, which would enflame a heart of ice, must set your ardent soul on fire.*[2] That books are inflammable and give out heat is further attested by several reliable witnesses. Edward FitzGerald does not like to *live with* Carlyle's *Heroes and Hero-Worship* about the house, because *it smoulders;*[3] Dorothy Wordsworth's *Journals* set Dr. John Brown *on fire: I am nearly burnt out,* he tells Ruskin;[4] whilst Edith Sichel reports that *Paracelsus, Dramatic Lyrics,* and *Men and Women, warmed* Mary Coleridge *with their fire.*[5]

Small wonder that they move men, nations, mountains almost, for the best of them are concentrations of faith. *All Africa, to the limits of Ethiopia and Nigritia, obeys the book of the Koran, after bowing to the book of the Gospel. China is ruled by the moral book of Confucius, and a great part of India by the Veda. Persia was governed for ages by the books of one of the Zoroasters.*[6] *No greater moral change ever passed over a nation,* saith Green,[7] *than passed over England during the years which parted the middle of the reign of Elizabeth from the meeting of the Long Parliament;* the cause was the translation of the *Bible into* our common language: *England became the people of a book, and that book was the Bible. It was the one English book which was familiar to every Englishman;* it was read in churches and at home, and *everywhere its words kindled a startling enthusiasm;* it fathered our prose literature, but far greater than its effect on literature, saith mine author, was its effect on *the character of the people at large: the whole moral effect which is produced now-a-days by the religious newspaper, the tract, the essay, the lecture, the missionary report, the sermon, was then produced by the Bible alone.* It changed *the whole temper of the nation,* gave *a new conception of life and man,* and inspired *a new moral impulse* in every class. Yet, argues William Cory, *the political enthusiasm of Puritans and Cavaliers, the nobleness of the first race of modern English gentlemen, must be ascribed not to sacred or*

[1] *Art of Writing.* 80. [2] Qt. Elton, *The Great Book-Collectors.* 51. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains.* i, 71. [4] Brown, *Letters.* 380. [5] 'Memoir', *Gathered Leaves.* Mary Coleridge. 14. [6] Voltaire, *Philosophical Dict.* 'Books'. [7] *Short History of the English People.* Everyman Ed. ii, 431–3.

classical books only, but also to the imagination which flashed from the stage of Shakespeare, as the Britons of a later time *were made more sweet of heart by 'the author of Waverley'.*[1] Thomas Carlyle affirms that the Church itself has been changed, reduced in power, by the introduction of Books: *He that can write a true Book, to persuade England, is not he the Bishop and Archbishop, the Primate of England and of all England? Books are the real working effective Church of a modern country. Nay,* he concludes, *not only our preaching, but even our worship,* is accomplished by the means of printed books.[2]

Particular discontents and grievances have been stirred or allayed by them: so *A Book,* argues Benjamin Disraeli,[3] *may be as great a thing as a Battle, and there are systems of Philosophy that have produced as great Revolutions as any that have disturbed the social and political existence of our centuries: Magna Charta* and the *Declaration of Independence;* the *Contrat Social* of Rousseau and Tom Paine's *Rights of Man* and Karl Marx his *Das Kapital. The disclosure of the stores of Greek literature wrought the revolution of the Renaissance; the disclosure of the older mass of Hebrew literature wrought the revolution of the Reformation.*[4] Nor need we set our eyes so far back; the miracle of the book is not ended. Writers are our ancestors. *Rousseau,* in a notable dithyramb of Amiel, *is an ancestor in all things.* He *founded travelling on foot before Töpffer, reverie before René, literary botany before George Sand, the worship of nature before St. Pierre, the democratic theory before the Revolution of* 1789, *political discussion and theological discussion before Mirabeau and Renan, the science of teaching before Pestalozzi, and Alpine description before De Saussure;* further, he made music fashionable, public confessions popular, and formed a new French prose style: *the close, chastened, passionate, interwoven style we know so well.* No one had more influence upon the French Revolution; no one had more influence upon the nineteenth century, *for Byron, Châteaubriand, Madame de Staël*

[1] *Guide to Modern English History.* i, 134–5. [2] *Heroes and Hero-Worship.* (1841.) 263. [3] 'Introduction' to *Memoir of Isaac D'Israeli.* [4] Green, *Short History of the English People.* Everyman's Ed. ii, 432.

and George Sand are all descended from him.[1] *It is, however,* as Voltaire explained, *with books as with men: a very small number play a great part,*[2] and even then, as I said just now, the influence is by reflex action rather than by direct contact. *The world is fundamentally hostile to literature, in great part because the world is gregarious, and literature is a solitary pursuit.*[3] People are content to be influenced at second hand: *You are acquainted with neither Hippocrates, nor Boerhaave, nor Sydenham, but you place your body in the hands of those who can read them. You leave your soul entirely to the care of those who are paid for reading the Bible.*[4] The thought of the world has been changed by Harvey's *Exercitatio Anatomica de Motu Cordis et Sanguinis in Animalibus,* Bacon's *Novum Organum,* Newton's *Principia,* and Darwin's *Origin of Species,* yet few have read those works. So great has been the influence of the world's principal books that, says Emerson, *perhaps the human mind would be a gainer if all the secondary writers were lost—say, in England, all but Shakespeare, Milton and Bacon—through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds.*[5] Yet great also is the influence of even lesser books. Viscount Morley[6] gives instance of *Areopagitica: the majestic classic of spiritual and intellectual freedom, with its height and spaciousness, its outbursts of shattering vituperation, its inflammatory scorn, its boundless power and* overflow of speech in all the keys of passion; and, of John Stuart Mill *On Liberty:* no short book *ever instantly produced so wide and so important an effect;* and Huxley *On the Physical Basis of Life* (1867) made a *profound sensation* on his generation comparable only with the effects in a political epoch of such works as Swift's *Conduct of the Allies* and Burke's *French Revolution.* But this power of books needs no further exposition, it is well known, and the sum of it is in the popular saying: *The Pen is mightier than the Sword,*[7] and no wonder, for *what holy cities are to nomadic tribes—a symbol of race and a bond of union—great books are to the wandering souls of men; they are the Meccas*

[1] *Amiel's Journal.* Trans. Ward. 111. [2] *Phil. Dict.* 'Books'. [3] Andrew Lang, Intro. *Pleasures of Bookland.* Shaylor. xx. [4] Voltaire, *Op. cit.* [5] *Society and Solitude.* 'Books.' [6] *Recollections.* i, 60–62. [7] Bulwer-Lytton, *Richelieu.* ii, 2.

of the mind. Homer was to Greece another Delphi.[1] No knowing where this power works, or when it may peep out, or hit out; it is potential in all books; in the good, so called, and the bad, so called; the great and the small, the approved and the disapproved. *The Godlike does ever, in very truth, endure there: now in this dialect, now in that, with various degrees of clearness;* but if in *Byron* and *Voltaire, how much more in the sphere-harmony of a Shakespeare, or a Goethe; the cathedral-music of a Milton; the humble genuine lark-notes of a Burns.*[2] Many experts of renown have sought to fathom the mystery of this power of words and left naught but mystery in the end. Nor can I do better, or at best do more than guess, or try out a new theorem; for, as he[3] says, *certainly the Art of Writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised;* not only in its ultimate condition of the completed book, but in each of its constituent words. *Each word,* says a modern lord of language, *may be not a precious stone only, but one that has shone on Solomon's temple or in Cleopatra's hair. Out of these illustrious atoms all the freakish pinnacles and cupolas of the world's wit were made, all the glow and intensity of its eloquence and the sweet poignancy of song.*[4] How and in what way these miraculous elements of a miraculous craft have moved, changed and affected men, I shall now, in my blunt way, proceed to show.

III. LIBERATING THE SOUL OF MAN

That they cast spells and enslave the spirit of man, with a slavery which releases, by a curious paradox, the soul to newer freedoms, may be inferred from the precedent examples. There are many who could add to them from their own knowledge, and some have done so, rejoicing in their revelations of magical experiences and transformations. Robert Louis Stevenson was *haunted* by *Love in the Valley,* he remembered waking *the echoes of the hills about Hyères*[5] with the lines:

[1] G. E. Woodberry, *Torch.* 176. [2] Carlyle, *Heroes and Hero-Worship.* (1841.) 264. [3] *Ib.* 258. [4] C. E. Montague, *A Writer's Notes on his Trade.* 4. [5] *Letters.* ii, 324.

When her mother tends her before the laughing mirror,
Tying up her laces, looping up her hair,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
More love should I have, and much less care.
When her mother tends her before the lighted mirror,
Loosening her laces, combing down her curls,
Often she thinks, were this wild thing wedded,
I should miss but one for the many boys and girls.[1]

Later he fell in *slavery* to the *Lake Isle of Innisfree*,[2] and earlier still Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads* had *cast a spell* over him. Knowing so well this power to stir the imagination, he makes a copy of *Virgil* open up for Robert Herrick in *The Ebb-Tide*[3] visions of his youth in far-away England and all the sweetness of the English countryside, as Wordsworth was calmed and soothed and enabled to conquer uncomfortable entrancements by holding in his hand some treasured volume,

Poor earthly casket of immortal verse,
Shakespeare, or Milton, labourers divine![4]

Nor is the effect at all times immediate. Books sow their influences as seeds are sown, to grow and bloom anon. *What were the words in which Meredith told me of that sunrise on the Adriatic, or Stevenson of the starry night in the Cevennes?* asks Vernon Lee. *Not one of those words has remained in my mind. But there is the shape into which they have moulded my thoughts and emotions, unchangeable, enduring.*[5] Well may Dr. Johnson[6] confess that books have *a secret influence on the understanding;* we cannot obliterate the ideas they insidiously inculcate; *he that reads books of science, though without any fixed idea of improvement, will grow more knowing; he that entertains himself with moral or religious treatises will imperceptibly advance in goodness; the ideas which are often offered to the mind will at last find a lucky moment when it is disposed to receive them.*

That which they can do is unlimited, they are masters of destiny, rulers of life and death: the forcible power of Plato's discourse of the Immortality of the Soul *provoked divers*

[1] George Meredith, 'Love in the Valley'. [2] By W. B. Yeats. [3] p. 3.
[4] *Prelude*. 164–5. [5] *Handling of Words*. 83. [6] *Adventurer*. 137.

Schollers unto death, saith Montaigne,[1] *that so they might more speedily enjoy the hopes he told them of.* Likewise it cannot be denied, as will appear many times in this treatise, that they are reliable spiritual restoratives, returning men into the safe-keeping of themselves. A notable illustration of this power is recorded of Petrarch. He and his brother had climbed a hill overlooking the Rhone valley and commanding a distant view of the Bay of Marseilles, when fancy prompted him to open the volume of *St. Augustine* which he often carried with him, and by chance he lit upon this passage: *and men go abroad to wonder at the heights of the mountains, and the lofty billows of the sea; the long courses of rivers, the vast compass of the ocean and the circular motion of the stars, and yet pass themselves by*,[2] which so moved him that he gazed no more upon the scenery of hills and the sea, but descended the mountain in silence, his eyes turned inwardly upon himself and the inner riches of his own soul.[3] *Shelley* not only gave George Moore his *first soul*, but *led all its first flights*.[4] Well may William Cory wish that Charlotte Brontë *would come back to us, and count up the myriads to whom she has given new souls;*[5] but whether they liberate the soul or enslave it, rejuvenate or destroy it, assuage desires or inflame them, arouse the imagination, stimulate the intellect, or exalt the emotions, it is all one, books move men as no other devices, and are a Paradise, a Heaven on earth, if they be used aright, good for the body, and better for the soul.

IV. HOW THEY TEACH THE ART OF LIVING

To these divers uses must be added those more proper to the contents of books, what their authors are at when they write, and what their readers expect from them; for the reader, diverse as he is in kind, will have a purpose in his books even though most time they are no more than toys:

[1] 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 161. [2] *Confessions*. x, 8. [3] Tatham, *Petrarca*. i, 323. [4] *Confessions of a Young Man*. 1904. 11. [5] *Letters and Journals*. 188.

> Books should to one of these four ends conduce:
> For wisdom, piety, delight and use.[1]

What should they teach but *the art of living?* asks Dr. Johnson,[2] and he is answered by the poet,[3] that they give

> New views to life, and teach us how to live;

if they do that they accomplish all that we need of wisdom; and that they can do it, though we are not always willing to obey, few would deny. Most acclaim them for this very quality, for, saith Emerson,[4] *the theory of books is noble*, coming as it does from the brooding of the scholar of the first age, who gave his thought new arrangement and uttered it into life, when it became truth: *it came to him, short-lived actions; it went out from him immortal thoughts. It came to him, business; it went from him, poetry. It was dead fact; now, it is quick thought. It can stand, and it can go. It now endures, it now flies, it now inspires:*

> 'Tis thine, the great, the golden chain to trace,
> Which runs through all connecting race with race.[5]

The true mirror of our reading is the course of our lives, for if, as Garrod holds, *it is life that shakes and rocks us*, it is *literature which stabilizes and confirms.*[6]

Xeuxidamus answered one that demanded of him why the Lacedemonians did not draw into a book the ordinances of prowess, that so their young might read them: *it is*, he said, *because they would rather accustome them to deeds and actions, than to bookes and writings*,[7] as Dr. Johnson sang in his *Vanity of Human Wishes*,

> Deign on the passing world to turn thine eyes,
> And pause awhile from letters to be wise;

yet many have been *desirous of considering sound learning and virtuous manners as convertible terms* and of believing that *the civilization of our barbarous manners would be essentially promoted by the promotion of useful letters.*[8] Mark Pattison argues, *they*

[1] Dominico Mancini. Trans. by Sir John Denham. [2] *Johnsonian Miscellanies.* i, 324. [3] Crabbe, *The Library.* [4] *The American Scholar.* [5] Crabbe, *The Library.* [6] *Profession of Poetry.* 257. [7] 'Of the Institution and Education of Children.' Montaigne, *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. i, 205–6. [8] Gilbert Wakefield, *Correspondence with C. J. Fox.* 124.

are not things to be learned in themselves, but rather *so many different object-glasses, through which we can look at things;* which Maurice de Guérin[1] supports, where he claims that the *Etudes de la Nature* clears and enlightens a sense in us which is *veiled, vague, inactive:* the sense which *gathers in physical beauties and conveys them to the soul,* where they are in turn *spiritualized, harmonized,* and *combined with ideal beauties, and thus enlarges its sphere of love and adoration;* they *let us into the minds of men,* enjoins another,[2] and *lay open to us the secrets of our own.* They are *indispensable,* says Marie Valyère, *not so much for what they teach as for what they suggest;* they both teach and suggest, as all know, and all can use them whatever their trade: *Homer is the poet for the warrior, Milton for the religionist, Tasso for women, Robert Southey for the patriot.*[3] There is a book for each one of us, and each convinces by its presence, suggestively and instructively. It was, I dare presume, for this reason that Sir Ferdinando Lapith built the privies at Crome at the top of three several towers, furnishing each with bookshelves containing *all the ripest products of human wisdom, such as the Proverbs of Solomon, Boëthius's 'Consolations of Philosophy', the apophthegms of Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius, the 'Enchiridion' of Erasmus, and all other works, ancient and modern, which testify to the nobility of the human soul.* He made his reasons clear in a tract, published in 1573, which he called *Certaine Priuy Counsels* by *One of Her Maiestie's Most Honourable Priuy Counsel, F. L. Knight,* where he argued *the necessities of nature are so base and brutish that in obeying them we are apt to forget that we are the noblest creatures of the universe.* Books, he believed, would counteract these *degrading effects:* read more of this curious enterprise in *Crome Yellow.*[4]

Thus in this matter of wisdom it is not surprising to read Voltaire[5] asserting that all the known world, save only savage nations, *is governed by books,* and, in our own day, H. G. Wells arguing that nations cannot live under modern conditions unless *aerated with books;* for, as Frederick Denison

[1] *Journal.* Trans. Trebutien. 72. [2] William Hazlitt. [3] S. T. Coleridge, *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 178. [4] Aldous Huxley. Chap. xi. [5] *Dict. Phil.* 'Books'.

Maurice observes,[1] *if they do not assist to make us better and more substantial men, they are only providing fuel for a fire larger, and more utterly destructive, than that which consumed the Library of the Ptolemies;* but *well managed,* as Jeremy Collier concedes, *they afford direction and discovery, strengthen the organ, enlarge the prospect of life.* Sir William Temple[2] gives out that modern scholars have recourse to the University *in quest of books, rather than men for their guides,* which Thomas Carlyle had in mind when he made that oracular declaration: *Once invent Printing, you metamorphosed all Universities or superseded them!*[3] for, as Bacon holds out, *books will speak plain, when Councellors blanch;*[4]

> Ah! when will both in friendly beams unite,
> And pour on erring man resistless light?[5]

But dead counsellors are safest, Dr. Johnson[6] quotes out of Alphonsus of Aragon, and adds, *the grave puts an end to flattery and artifice, and the information that we receive from books is pure from interest, fear, or ambition.*

How much better, as Richard Baxter[7] counsels, to read a good book than listen to a mean preacher: *preachers,* even, *may be silenced or banished, when good books may be at hand; books may be kept at a smaller charge than preachers.* Good, therefore, to learn from Paul Bourget that *the crowd wants to use the book that it reads,* and if the time comes, which, if we are to believe Anatole France, it always does, when *books that were useful cease to be useful,* it matters little, since they have served their purpose and we need not *regret that they were written.* Let this not be the occasion of concern, for all things perish in time, some before, some after fruition: we have as yet no power to adjust this ordering of nature, even if we would; and in this general process of change books, being mortal, are mutable also, they come and go, blossom and fade, having sown their seeds. That they live longer than most of the works of man, is well known and sufficiently shown in this treatise, and Sir Thomas Browne holds[8] that

[1] *On Books.* [2] *Ancient and Modern Learning.* [3] *Heroes and Hero-Worship.* (1841.) 261. [4] *Essays.* 'Of Counsel'. [5] Crabbe, *The Library.* [6] *Rambler.* 87. [7] *Christian Directory.* [8] *Religio Medici.* Pt. i, Sect. 23.

our *Holy Bible* is the one work of man which is *too hard for the teeth of time, and cannot perish but in the general Flames, when all things shall confess their Ashes.*

Nor need they be what at all times are considered good books (Arsène Houssaye insists that it is only bad books that are good for anything); for books are like morals in Rudyard Kipling's expostulation:

> The wildest dreams of Kew are the facts of Khatmandhu,
> And the crimes of Clapham chaste in Martaban.[1]

Good men down the ages have damned, burnt, expurgated, condemned and forbidden books, believing and making bad what others believed good. The most complete catalogue of the world's best books may thus be the *Index Expurgatorius* at the Vatican. How these Canutes and Partingtons have expostulated against the ocean of books or tried to sweep it up is well known and a common joke, to which I shall come anon.

V. WHERE BOOKS HAVE FAILED

Before I proceed farther, however, I must rescue myself from any suspicion of faith in the omnipotence of books which the precedent chapters may have occasioned. I support no such opinion. There was an odd observation made long ago by Joseph Glanvill, which puts my case. '*Tis no disparagement to Philosophy, that it cannot Deifie us, or make good the impossible promise of the Primitive Deceiver, yet those raised contemplations of God and Nature, wherewith Philosophy doth acquaint us, enlarge and ennoble the spirit, and infinitely advance it above an ordinary level;*[2] and although the diffusion of books through the whole community has worked greater effect than *artillery, machinery, and legislation,*[3] so that *mankind are the creatures of books,*[4] there is no news that these bookfed multitudes are all angels of culture. We are too often reminded that they are not by wars, cruelties, thefts, deceits, graspings, scandals,

[1] 'In the Neolithic Age', *Seven Seas.* 127. [2] 'Apology for Philosophy', *Scepsis Scientifica.* (1665.) 175–6. [3] Channing, *Address* at Boston. 1838. [4] Leigh Hunt, *A Book for a Corner.*

and all manner of uncharitable acts and unkindliness, which have forced some good and great men to despair, and to curse, as Beethoven did, the *miserable rabble* called humanity. Books increase and readers of them multiply; millionaires, as Andrew Carnegie, municipalities, states, endow and build libraries, but the *profanum vulgus*, the rabble, endureth for ever; the poor in spirit are always with us, and man is still as much *a burlesque of what he should be*,[1] as he was when Montaigne summed him up as a *many-headed, divers-armed, and furiously-raging monster; wretched, weake and miserable; whom if you consider well, what is he, but a crawling, and ever-moving Ants'-neast?*[2] and Dean Swift castigated him in *Gulliver;* and so he remains for Dean Inge to reprove in innumerable tracts and treatises in these present times. George Moore is therefore buttressed with logic when he asserts that *if good books did good, the world would have been converted long ago;* instead of that, recent events read more like a fulfilment of Leonardo da Vinci's prophecy that *creatures shall be upon the earth who will always be fighting one with another with very great losses with frequent deaths on either side. These shall set no bounds to their malice; by their fierce limbs a great number of the trees in the immense forests of the world shall be laid level with the ground; and when they have crammed themselves with food it shall gratify their desire to deal out death, affliction, labours, terrors and banishment to every living thing. And by reason of their boundless pride they shall wish to rise towards heaven, but the excessive weight of their limbs shall hold them down. There shall be nothing remaining on the earth or under the earth or in the waters that shall not be pursued and molested and destroyed, and that which is in one country taken away to another; and their own bodies shall be made the tomb and the means of transit of all the living bodies which they have slain. O Earth! what delays thee to open and hurl them headlong into the deep fissures of thy huge abysses and caverns, and no longer to display in the sight of heaven so savage and ruthless a monster?*[3]

[1] Schopenhauer, *Studies in Pessimism*. Trans. Saunders. 24. [2] 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 207. [3] *Note-Books of Leonardo da Vinci*. McCurdy. 289.

That man had been neither destroyed nor arrested in his destructive progress Jeremy Taylor testified[1] in his day in a sermon preached at the funeral of that Worthy Knight, Sir George Dalstone, in the year 1657, where he besought his hearers to observe how many *righteous causes are oppressed, how many good men are reproached, how Religion is persecuted, upon what strange principles the greatest Princes of the World transact their greatest affairs, how easily they make Wars, and how suddenly they break Leagues, and at what expense and vast pensions they corrupt each other's Officers, and how the greatest part of mankind watches to devour one another, and they that are devoured are commonly the best, the poor, and the harmless, the gentle and uncrafty, the simple and religious*, and since *all good men are exposed to danger* he affirms that this world is *a place of Wasps and Insects, of Vipers and Dragons, of Tigers and Bears*, their victims *Sheep* who are *eaten by men, or devoured by Wolves and Foxes, or die of the rot*, and when they do not *they redeem their lives by giving their Fleece and their Milk* only to die when *their death will pay their charges of the Knife;* following upon which, we are prepared to learn from Schopenhauer, that although *man's range of vision embraces the whole of his life, and extends far into the past and the future*, in one respect, at least, the beasts are his superiors, in *their quiet, placid enjoyment of the present moment.*[2]

> And since he cannot spend and use aright
> The little time here given him in trust,
> But wasteth it in weary undelight
> Of foolish toil and trouble, strife and lust,
> He naturally claimeth to inherit
> The everlasting Future, that his merit
> May have full scope; as surely is most just.[3]

For more to this end, corroborative evidence of this *continuum* of folly, read it in *Jeremiah* and *Ecclesiastes*, *Erasmus*, *Voltaire* and *Swift*, *Schopenhauer*, *Nietzsche*, *Bernard Shaw*, *H. G. Wells*, *Spengler*, *ad infinitum et passim*, and arrest my digression, for excluding *the passionate few*,[4] *the acute but honourable*

[1] *The Worthy Communicant.* (1683.) 398–9. [2] *Studies in Pessimism.* Trans. Saunders. 20. [3] James Thomson (B.V.), *City of Dreadful Night.* xiii. [4] Stendhal.

minority,[1] the world hath but two classes—those who take no notice of what it does and those who run with it for company.

VI. A BRIEF CATALOGUE OF ADVANTAGES

Of the diverse advantages which books have bestowed upon men, that of upholding in moments of depression, *amara temperare*,[2] is not least but most necessary, and especially conducing to the good of mankind: he who has once known their satisfaction, Emerson claims, *is provided with a resource against calamity*.[3] What *Virgil* has done others have done also: *Homer*, *Horace*, *Dante*, *Shakespeare*, among poets of the Western world; and in the Orient, Confucius in his *Discourses* and *Analects;* Lao-Tsze in his *Tao;* the *Mahabharata* with the Lord Buddha's Song, *Bhagavat Gita*, and the *Upanishads* of Hindustan; *Al Koran* of Mahomet; the *Zend-Avesta* of the Parsees who follow the word of Zarathustra; the *Talmud* of the Hebrews; and all the poets and story-tellers: *Hafiz* and *Omar Khayyam*, the *Arabian Nights* and the *Jataka*—the list has no end nor has their influence. *They support us in solitude, and keep us from becoming a burden to ourselves. They help us to forget the coarseness of men and things, compose our cares and our passions, and lay our disappointments to sleep;*[4] they are

> The noblest road to happiness below;[5]

they are links in the chain of consciousness, binding together the different scattered divisions of our personal identity; landmarks, guides in our journey through life; pegs and loops on which to hang up or from which to take down at pleasure *the wardrobe of moral imagination;* they are *for thoughts and for remembrance; they*

> Inform the head and rectify the heart;[6]

like Fortunatus's Wishing-Cap, they give us the best riches, those of Fancy, transporting us not (solely) over half the globe,

[1] George Meredith. [2] Horace, 'To sweeten the bitters'. [3] *Letters and Social Aims.* (1898.) 129. [4] Comtesse de Gaulis, *Memoirs.* [5] George Crabbe, *The Library.* [6] *Ib.*

but which is better, over half our lives—at a word's notice (read more in Hazlitt his *Plain Speaker*, ii. 66 *passim*); they are *the calmers as well as the instructors of the mind*, says Mrs. Inchbald; and purifiers of the body as well, for, if we are to believe a modern authority, to read the works of George Borrow *is to wash soul and body in the open air, to be purified from the stains of civilization, to meet and greet the Mighty Mother.*[1]

Charles Lamb cannot *sit and think: books think for me*, he said;[2] they *interpret what we see and experience;*[3] they add to our emotions, make the present live and the past survive; *Modern Painters* opened up *a new and glorious universe* for F. J. Furnivall;[4] by reading, a man *does as it were antedate his life*, making himself contemporary with ages past;[5] Zeno recommended as a prime means towards happiness resorting to the dead and holding familiar converse with them by means of books, for thus we should have *such good instructors as have been observed in our predecessors:*[6]

> The pen records tyme past and present both:
> Skill brings forth bookes, and bookes is nurse to troth.[7]

They are the legacies that genius leaves to mankind, *delivered down from generation to generation*, presents to the posterity of those yet unborn;[8] nothing so pleasant, so delightful, as Letters (saith Cicero), *by whose means the infinite of things, the incomprehensible greatness of nature, the heavens, the earth, and all the Seas of this vast universe, are made known to us.*[9] Further, they have taught us, he relates, *religion, moderation, stowtnesse, courage; redeemed our souls out of darknesse, to make her see* all things, high and low, first and last, and those between both. They store and supply us with all such things

[1] Lionel Johnson, *Post Liminium*. 201. [2] 'Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading.' [3] W. E. Channing. [4] Qt. John Monro, *F. J. Furnivall*. xxii. [5] Jeremy Collier, 'Of the Entertainment of Books', *Essays*. [6] Preface. *Montaigne*. First Eng. Trans. (1620.) [7] Churchyard, *Worthiness of Wales*. (1776.) 18. [8] Addison, *Spectator*. 166. [9] 'Quibus infinitatem rerum atque naturae, et in hoc ipso mundo coelum, terras, maria cognoscimus.' *Tusc*. v, 36. Qt. Montaigne, *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. ii, 228.

as *may make us live happily and well, and instruct us how to pass our time without sorrow or offense*. They are the keys which admit us to *the whole world of thought and fancy and imagination; to the company of saint and sage, of the wisest and the wittiest at their wisest and wittiest moments*.[1] They are additional senses: they help us *to hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all time*, and *to see with the keenest eyes;*[2] they are the eyes through which we look at the world of thought and things: *Virgil* and *Cicero* were to Petrarch additional eyes through which he looked into a new world, they are *the two eyes of our language*, he said, *gli occhi de la lingua nostra;*[3] and, since *Victor Hugo* carried Amiel *from world to world*, they are vehicles which transport us beyond ourselves.[4] And finally they are also the mirrors in which we look at ourselves:

> These to his memory—since he held them dear,
> Perchance as finding there unconsciously
> Some image of himself. . . .[5]

VII. LACHRYMAE MUSARUM

The power of books to cheer us out of our sad or sullen moods may not always follow the direct and merry path: it may reach its destination deviously by a tearful ellipse, or deflexion through the vale of tears; for if *The Innocents Abroad* and *Three Men in a Boat* have made whole nations laugh, others, as *East Lynne*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, and *Clarissa*, have made them weep. Scaliger *never read Socrates' death in Plato's 'Phaedo' but he wept; Austin shed tears when he read the destruction of Troy;*[6] when Sara Fielding read *Clarissa*, she told Richardson, her heart glowed, she was overwhelmed, her only *vent* was tears;[7] an old Scotch doctor, a Jacobin and a freethinker, who, Sir George Trevelyan records,[8] could only

[1] J. R. Lowell, 'Books and Libraries', *Democracy and Other Addresses*. [2] *Ib.* [3] Qt. Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca*. 28. [4] *Amiel's Journal*. Trans. Ward. 85. [5] Tennyson, Dedication, *Idylls of the King*. The dedication is to Queen Victoria and the reference to Prince Albert. [6] Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 3, v. [7] *Correspondence of Richardson*. Barbauld. ii, 60. [8] *Macaulay*. i, 334.

be got to attend church by the positive orders of the Governor-General of the province in India where he was stationed, cried over the last volume of *Clarissa*, until *he was too ill to appear at dinner.*

Tears flowed in 1850 when Macaulay *cried his eyes out* over the last volume of that book;[1] and he gave Thackeray a vivid account of the effect of *Clarissa* on the English colony in India. He was passing the hot season in the Hills, with the Governor-General, and the Secretary of the Government, and the Commander-in-Chief, and their wives. He had *Clarissa* with him and when they began to read it *the whole station* bubbled over *in a passion of excitement* about Miss Harlowe and *her scoundrelly Lovelace; the governor's wife seized the book; the secretary waited for it; the Chief Justice could not read it for tears.* Thackeray recounts that as Macaulay told this tale of woe to him in the Athenæum Club, *he acted the whole scene*, pacing up and down the club library. To complete my catalogue of the lachrymosities of our most bookish peer I give that instance of his reading aloud the story of Lefevre from *Tristram Shandy* to a party of friends visiting Lichfield on a Sunday in April 1849: *I read the story with many tears*, he confesses,[2] *and it was heard with tears, even by Trevelyan himself, who is not easily moved to that degree by fiction.*

Tears started to Dr. Johnson's eyes when, at Oban, he recited a passage from Goldsmith's *Traveller*, as Boswell helped him on with his greatcoat,[3] and *when he would try to repeat the celebrated 'Prosa Ecclesiastica pro Mortuis', as it is called, beginning 'Dies irae, Dies illa', he could never pass the stanza ending thus, 'Tantus labor non sit cassus', without bursting into a flood of tears.*[4] Charles Lamb *would read noble passages* from Milton, *actually weeping as he read;*[5] Heine, when a youth, *wept in his little room* over the death of the *most blessed heroes of freedom: King Aegis of Sparta, Caius and Tiberius Gracchus of Rome, Jesus of Jerusalem, and Robespierre of Paris;*[6] and earlier

[1] *Ib.* ii, 237. [2] *Journal.* Qt. *The Times.* 7.xii.1928. [3] *Tour.* Hill. vi, 344. [4] Piozzi, *Anecdotes of Dr. Johnson.* Ed. S. C. Roberts. 130. [5] *Lamb.* P. Fitzgerald. 169. [6] *Heinrich Heine's Memoirs.* Ed. Karpeles. i, 61.

in his life he would steal into the Palace Garden at Düsseldorf to read *Don Quixote*, pronouncing the words aloud because of his lack of skill in reading, and thus were the birds and streams able to hear, and, being innocent, like children and like the boy himself, *knowing nothing of the irony of the world*, wept over the sorrows of the unhappy knight: *a veteran oak sobbed, and the waterfall* wagged his white beard the more and seemed to cry out upon the wickedness of the world.[1]

After hearing Panaef read *Poushkin* to him Tolstoy *sat down on a sofa and wept causeless but blissful tears;*[2] Francis Hindes Groome tells[3] that his grandfather, Rector of Monk Soham in Suffolk, was so *tender-hearted* that he was *moved to tears by the Waverley novels;* one night in 1881, during his residence on the Island of Madeira, William Cory was reading Lanfrey's *History*, when his wife, who was writing at the other end of the table, looked up, and observed that he was weeping: *Yes*, he said, *I am weeping as I wept fifty years ago over the death of Nelson*. He was wrought up with the news of *the disgraceful flight of our men from Majuba*, and *Lanfrey* induced tears which purged him of despair;[4] twice in his life, *twelve years apart*, he was thus *melted, prostrated and yet comforted* by *Les Misérables*.[5] Books filled Alexander Smith with awe as though he stood

> In presence of a king. They give me tears;
> Such glorious tears as Eve's fair daughters shed,
> When first they clasped a Son of God, all bright
> With burning plumes and splendours of the sky.[6]

Gray told Horace Walpole that the *Castle of Otranto* made the undergraduates at Cambridge *cry a little and all in general afraid to go to bed o'nights;*[7] and the last scenes of *Henry V* made Edward FitzGerald *blubber*.[8]

But such examples are too frequent, so I shall end this chapter with an anti-climax which is more in key with our Shavian era. Professor Garrod confesses[9] that one day he was

[1] *Ib.* i, 59. [2] *Life.* Maude. i, 161. [3] *Two Suffolk Friends.* 13. [4] Cory, *Letters and Journals.* 469. [5] *Ib.* 391. [6] *A Life-Drama.* [7] Gray, *Poems and Letters.* (1820.) 433–4. [8] *More Letters.* 150. [9] *Profession of Poetry.* 257.

reading *East Lynne*, that lachrymatory bomb which Mrs. Henry Wood threw so effectively at the Victorian age. As he read he wept. *The manner in which the tears ran down* his cheeks made him *an object of general attention.* An *elderly and benevolent clergyman*, moved by this pathetic sight, *expressed the hope that* the weeping man was *not in any trouble*, and was perplexed when he learnt *with perfect truth* that the Professor *was only crying because this book was so bad a book. God forbid that I should cry over 'Lear' or 'Othello'*, he says, *I should know that there was something the matter either with Shakespeare or with myself.* The best books strike too deep for tears.

VIII. CONSOLERS AND REFUGES

Leigh Hunt *entrenched* himself in his books equally against sorrow and the weather;[1] they eased Montaigne of the *burden of weary-some sloth;*[2] Edward FitzGerald *shut out the accursed 'Eastern Question'* by reading the stories of Boccaccio;[3] Benjamin Robert Haydon worked with more *abstracted devotion* at his craft of painting when his books were near him, and after he had *stuck at it all day* he would walk in the evening among his books *in ecstasy*, reading nothing, but dwelling on what he had read with great content, his imagination *crowded* with Milton's Satan and *all his rebel host*, and with Shakespeare's immortal crew: Hamlet, Lear, Falstaff, Cordelia, Imogen, Macbeth, and Puck.[4] So necessary the companionship of books to Isaac D'Israeli, that without a *command of his library* he was *nothing*.[5]

I may not here omit that use to which so many who are accounted wise have put them, as means of retreat from the world itself and the noisome weariness of mortal customs, which is well supported by Cicero, whose ardency for books increased with his disgust of everything else: *summum me*

[1] *Essays*, 'My Books'. Camelot Ed. 287. [2] 'Of Three Commerces or Societies', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. iii, 52. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 389. [4] *Autobiography*. iii, 110. [5] *The Croker Papers*. ii, 42.

eorum studium tenet sicut odium iam ceterarum rerum;[1] and *not only scholars*, Walter Pater allows,[2] *but all disinterested lovers of books* will ever look to literature, as to all other fine art, *for a refuge, a sort of cloistral refuge, from a certain vulgarity in the actual world;* and he holds that a perfect poem like *Lycidas*, a perfect fiction like *Esmond*, the perfect handling of a theory like Newman's *Idea of a University*, has for them the same quality as a religious *retreat*.

Lionel Johnson, who read all night, slept all day, breakfasting when others dined, found his library his cloister, and when asked by Yeats whether such habits did not *separate him from men and women*, replied: *In my library I have all the knowledge of the world that I need.*[3] Books are thus a substitute for society. *Everywhere have I sought peace and found it only in a corner with a book.*[4] *I too have found repose where he did*, said Robert Southey, *in books and retirement, but it was there alone I sought it: to these my nature, under the direction of a merciful Providence, led me betimes, and the world can offer nothing which should tempt me from them.*[5] By his *Imitation of Christ*, Thomas à Kempis hath medicined more sick souls than any other Christian writer outside of the Holy Scriptures; Eugénie de Guérin[6] speaks of *passages in it suited to all situations of the soul, remedies for every passion, a divine gentleness; anyone may read it with profit*, and she would *recommend it alike to the sick, to the world's unhappy ones, to persons given up to the darkest despair; had Judas read it*, she adds, *he would never have been able to hang himself.*

Such testimonies are innumerable, infinite in time and variety; for books are, and none but the profane would contest it, the chiefest consolers of man on this his earthly pilgrimage, *they are the soul's viaticum*, as Richard Whitlock owns in his *Zootomia*, which I have cited at length in my first chapter. They are a form of life within life, more real than reveries, more satisfying than dreams:

[1] 'I have the greatest longing for books along with hatred of everything else.' *Ad Atticum.* i, 11. [2] 'Style'. *Appreciations.* 14. [3] Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil.* 181. [4] Thomas à Kempis. [5] *Colloquies.* xiv. [6] *Letters.* 141.

Dream, who love dreams! forget all grief;
Find in sleep's nothingness relief;
Better my dreams! Dear, human books,
With kindly voices, winning looks!
Enchant me with your spells of art,
And draw me homeward to your heart.[1]

And if, as it may happen, such consolations are not for all who read, nor at all times for all who love books, they add to our riches, for *the world may be kind or unkind, it may seem to us to be hastening on the wings of enlightenment and progress to an imminent millennium, or it may weigh us down with the sense of insoluble difficulty and irremediable wrong; but whatever else it be, so long as we have good health and a good library, it can hardly be dull.*[2] For that reason, as Isaac D'Israeli follows it,[3] those tyrants and usurpers who possessed *sense as well as courage*, have proved the *most ardent patrons of literature*, knowing it to their interest *to turn aside the public mind from political speculations, and to afford their subjects the inexhaustible occupations of curiosity, and the consoling pleasures* of the *imagination*.

But I risk being over-tedious in these testimonies, which, howsoever in some men's too severe censures they may be held absurd and ridiculous, I am the bolder to insert, as not borrowed from circumforanean rogues and vagabonds, but out of the writings of worthy philosophers and poets, yet living some of them, and learned professors, in famous Universities, who are able to establish that which they have said, and vindicate themselves from all cavillers and ignorant persons.

[1] Lionel Johnson, 'Oxford Nights,' *Poetical Works*. 99. [2] Balfour, 'The Pleasures of Reading', *Essays and Addresses*. 37. [3] *Cur. of Lit.* i, 2–3.

PART XIV

BOOKS PHARMACEUTICALLY DISPOSED

I. THEIR MEDICINAL PROPERTIES GENERALLY CONSIDERED

The medical properties of books are well known to the learned and a *favourite theme with philosophers and students.*[1] They are *medicinal, stringent;*[2] *useful drugs and materials wherewith to temper and compose effective and strong medicines;*[3] as the poet Henry Vaughan well sang:

> By sucking you the wise, like bees, do grow
> Healing and rich.

No cause for wonder here, if we refer all this to *the narrow suture of the spirit and the body, inter-communicating their fortunes one unto another;*[4] as in all times physicians have noted the close connection and ready intercourse between the minds and bodies of men, and the histories are full of evidence of defects responding to mental, spiritual, emotional and other non-medicinal treatments which in some ages have been accounted miraculous.

The curative properties of the arts are well known, medicine itself being as much an art as a science, if not more. *Inventum est medicina meum,* said Apollo,[5] and if we are to believe Varro, Pliny, and Columella, most of the best medicines of the Greeks were derived from his Oracles, as many in all ages have derived prophylactics from colours, sounds, forms, and words, æsthetically disposed. Melody has many notable records in this respect, as Saul was helped by David's harp;

> Such sweet compulsion doth in music lie.[6]

[1] 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals.* Richard Le Gallienne. 108. [2] Emerson, 'Books', *Society and Solitude.* 158. [3] Milton, *Areopagitica.* Ed. Holt White. 74. [4] Montaigne, 'Of the Force of Imagination', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. i, 108. [5] 'Medicine is my invention.' *Ovid.* Met. i, 521. [6] Milton, 'Arcades'. 68.

In olden times wounds were cured by song, as Apuleius contends, out of *Homer*, that the blood of Ulysses was thus stayed as it gushed from the wound, by a chanted ditty;[1] and Aulus Gellius[2] gives an instance, out of *Theophrastus*, of people being cured of gouty pains by the soothing measures of a flute-player, which is supported by Democritus, who holds that flute-music is a remedy for *snake-bites* and many other maladies. Eloquence, which is words and feelings harmoniously arranged, is no less efficacious, whether applied to the ills of particular persons, or to the *body politic*, as when Demosthenes, *by the medicine of his words of praise*, healed the distemper of the Athenians, so that they were *brought to pride themselves no less on the battle against Philip than on the triumphs won at Marathon and Salamis.*[3]

Aches and pains often, as we know, trouble many without just physical cause, and there can be little doubt that it is these which yield most readily to a prescription of books. Cardan doubtless had this in mind when he called a library *the physic of the soul*, where *divine authors fortify the mind, make men bold and constant;* for (as Hyperius adds) *godly conference will not permit the mind to be tortured with absurd cogitations.*[4] Many memorable cures are examples of the efficacy of psychotherapy. A curious instance is cited out of his own experience by Samuel Butler.[5] A young man came to him *in a flood of tears over the loss of his grandmother, of whose death at the age of ninety-three he had just heard.* Butler tried all the *panaceas* without effect, and was on the point of giving him up in despair, when he thought of *crossing* the sorrow-stricken man with the ancient ballad of *Wednesday Cocking*, with the result that he *brightened up instantly* and *departed in as cheerful a state as he had been before in a desponding one.* Such methods are well known, and are much in favour for lulling the sorrows of children, for whom all manner of crude and

[1] *Apologia.* Trans. Butler. 74. [2] *Attic Nights.* iv, 13. [3] Longinus, *The Sublime.* Trans. Prickard. 39. [4] Qt. Burton, *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 107, 108. According to *Diodorus Siculus.* i, 49, 3, this was the inscription over the door of the Library at Thebes. [5] *Alps and Sanctuaries.* 55.

primitive verses are reliable soothing-syrups; and I shall presently show how the most physical of maladies respond to a treatment of books; but before coming to the cures I must take my generalization yet a step further.

So to follow this equality or correspondence between books and medicine yet a little, I may mention how many have discerned a chemical relationship both in their appearance and condition, as Plato when he compares Socrates to the Apothecary's gallipot, that had owls, apes and satyrs on the outsides, but precious drugs within;[1] or Amiel, when he asserts that *Victor Hugo draws in sulphuric acid;*[2] and Byron means no less when, in a request to John Murray, he does not scruple to mix *soda-powders, Acton's corn-rubbers, and Scott's Romances.* A library pharmaceutically disposed, says one,[3] would have the appearance of a *dispensatory*, and might properly enough be so called. He is supported by no less an authority than Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, who looks upon a library as *a mental chemist shop filled with the crystals of all forms and hues* which come from the union of thought with *local circumstances and universal principle;*[4] for he supposes *that a man's mind does in time form a neutral salt with the elements in the universe for which it has special elective affinities;* which the Countess of Blessington also discovers in her diagnosis of poets as *the chemists of sentiment.*[5] The same doctrine is taught by Richard Le Gallienne, who stoutly maintains that the library will ultimately *take the place of the dispensary*, and, *instead of giving us prescriptions of nauseous drugs, the physician will write down the titles of delightful books—books tonic or narcotic, stimulating or sedative, as our need may be.*[6] After all this it is no wonder to find that a library is a hospital, as George Crabbe describes it in a verse of his:

> Where mental wealth the poor in thought may find,
> And mental physic the diseased in mind.[7]

[1] Bacon, *Apophthegms.* Bohn Ed. 181. [2] *Journal.* Trans. Ward. 91. [3] Crabbe, *Works.* (1847.) Cumberland. IV, ii, 32. [4] *Professor at the Breakfast Table.* (1902.) 23–4. [5] *Desultory Thoughts.* 48. [6] Richard Le Gallienne, 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals.* 110–11. [7] *The Library.*

In a collection of books he sees remedies for many ills, but mostly that *Balm of Gilead* which alleviates sick souls:

> See here the balms that passion's wounds assuage;
> See coolers here that damp the fire of rage;
> Here alteratives by slow degrees control
> The chronic habits of the sickly soul;
> And round the heart and o'er the aching head,
> Mild opiates here their sober influence spread.[1]

When we recall how many of our older book-collectors have been doctors, we cannot resist the notion that such benefactors of literature as Radcliffe, Mead, Sloane, Hunter, etc., had this advantage in mind when founding their libraries. And now let us examine the particular evidences of the medicinal properties and their pharmacopœial status.

II. PRESERVATIVES AND PROPHYLACTICS

Among the numerous evidences of the medicinal disposition of books I find several allied instances of fertilization and preservation, as when Lady Constance, in *Tancred, guanoed her mind by reading French novels*, and Matthew Arnold *read about a hundred lines of the 'Odyssey'* to keep himself from *putrefaction* during the drudgery of his inspectorship of schools.[2] The preservative character of books had before his day been observed by Payne Fisher, who caused to be printed on the title-page of his *Elogia Sepulchralia* the words: *Miramur periisse Homines? Monumenta fatiscunt* (Anson), and *Nescia Musarum sed monumenta mori* (Ovid), which is thus Englished by a wit of that age:

> Men timely die, and Princes day by day
> Moulder to dust: but Books will live for aye,
> And re-embalm us in the coldest day![3]

So it is no news to learn that books are the great preservatives of history:

> Here all that live no more; preserved they lie,
> In tombs that open to the curious eye;[4]

[1] *Ib.* [2] *Letters.* i, 75. [3] Dibdin, *Bibliophobia.* 78. [4] George Crabbe, *The Library.*

and that, as the poet Vaughan sings:

> Cæsar had perished from the world of men,
> Had not his sword been rescued by his pen.[1]

Some, as Dr. Rosenbach,[2] argue that book-collecting acts as an elixir of life, keeping men young, *a new type of life insurance;* the *wonderful library* of Mr. W. A. White of New York *would take away the load of years from a Methuselah*, even *to read over the partial list of his treasures* would cause rejuvenation; and he asserts that his own Uncle Moses, a notable bookseller and booklover of Philadelphia, *grew younger and younger as he sat year after year surrounded by books.* That the reading of them may well be as efficacious in the opposite effect of giving ripeness to youth, is proved by Fuller, who says: *history maketh a young man to be old without either wrinkles or grey hair, privileging him with the experience of age without either the infirmities or the inconveniences thereof.*[3]

Finally in this class of their properties they are prophylactics against several diseases. Pliny the Younger *strengthened* his *digestion*, and thus prevented many ills, by reading aloud Greek or Latin orations;[4] and Dibdin records how the Nestor of bibliographers of his day ended a tirade against an epidemic of bibliophobia with a challenge to typhus, scarlatina, and even to the then prevailing cholera, feeling proof against those evils so long as he possessed his beloved books, and if Fate held the worst for him (he was then an octogenarian), he would die content, *hugging* his *Homer*.[5] For another bibliomaniac, Dibdin advocates *Russia leather* as a *charm and protection against epidemic miasmata of every description;* give him, he says, *the treble-rowed entrenchment of his library* and he will snap his fingers alike at *the arrows of fate and the canker of care*,[6] both of which predispose us to other ills.

Horace Walpole longed for a catalogue of *lounging books*, that one might take up *in the gout, low-spirits, ennui:* gay poetry, odd whimsical authors, as Rabelais, etc. *Even a catalogue raisonné of such might be in itself a good lounging book.*[7]

[1] 'On Sir Thomas Bodley's Library'. [2] *Books and Bidders.* 33. [3] Qt. Lubbock, *Pleasures of Life.* i, 59. [4] *Letters.* Melmoth. Loeb Ed. ix, 36. [5] *Bibliophobia.* 65. [6] *Ib.* 50–51. [7] *Walpoliana.* (1800.) 166–7.

Sterne commends his own *Tristram Shandy* as such a book, medicinal to that end: *'Tis wrote*, he saith, *against the spleen! in order, by a more frequent and a more convulsive elevation and depression of the diaphragm, and the succussations of the intercostal and abdominal muscles in laughter, to drive the gall and other bitter juices from the gall-bladder, liver, and sweetbread of his Majesty's subjects, with all the inimicitious passions which belong to them, down to their duodenums;*[1] and at the end of the fourth volume he once again dilates upon the curative properties of his novel. *True Shandeism*, he says, *opens the heart and lungs;* and, *like all those affections which partake of its nature, it forces the blood and other vital fluids of the body to run freely through their channels, and makes the wheel of life run long and cheerfully round;*[2] and there is even some little evidence, worth further exploration by the medical profession, which suggests that even paper and ink may be taken with beneficial results in some distempers. Samuel Butler cites an instance[3] of a man who was cured of a dangerous illness by swallowing the doctor's prescription, which he understood to be the medicine itself.

Bulwer-Lytton[4] would promote this faith to a practical account by forming a *curative* library whose compartments should no longer bear such labels as Philology, Natural Science, Poetry, but *according to the diseases for which they are severally good, bodily and mental: up from a dire calamity, or the pangs of the gout, down to a fit of spleen or a slight catarrh.* In such a bibliotorium treatment would be prescribed for all diseases. He advises light reading with a whey-posset and barley-water for a cold; biography, preferably of good men, when *some one sorrow, that is yet reparable, gets hold of your mind like a monomania;* and when, Heaven having denied you this or that, you feel that life is blank and empty, he prescribes *the Book of Books . . . the lignum vitae, the cardinal medicine for all.* But *books, taken indiscriminately*, he expostulates, *are no cure to the diseases and afflictions of the mind.* Scientific application is essential. No use flying to a novel or the last light

[1] *Tristram Shandy*. iv, 22. [2] *Ib.* iv, 32. [3] *Note Books*. 311. [4] *The Caxtons*.

book of fashion in a great sorrow: *one might as well take a rose-draught for the plague.*

Goethe, he says, was a physician who knew how to heal himself, for, when he lost his son, he found solace in a science that was new to him; so Bulwer hastens to prescribe *a course of science and hard reasoning* for all irremediable sorrows. *Bring the brain to act upon the heart!* he orders as a counter-irritant. If science be too much against the grain, take a strange language: Greek, Arabic, Scandinavian, Chinese, Welsh. For loss of fortune he advises *something elegant and cordial*, since here the head rather than the heart is affected, and thus he finds *the higher class of poets a valuable remedy*. For hypochondria what better than *a brisk course of travels—especially the early, out-of-the-way, marvellous, and legendary*. For that *vice of the mind* which he calls *sectarianism*, not religious, but little, narrow prejudices, gossiping, prying, backbiting, *a large and generous, mildly aperient course of history* he finds better than that hellebore with which the old leeches of the Middle Ages purged the cerebellum. He cured a disconsolate widower, who *obstinately refused every other medicament*, with *a strict course of geology;* and he brags of a not less notable cure of a young Cambridge student who had caught *a cold fit of freethinking, with great shiverings, from wading out of his depth in Spinoza*. He omits to name the remedy, although it was certainly efficacious, since his patient's *theological constitution* became so robust that he ate up *two livings and a deanery*.

III. THE CLAIM THAT THEY ARE CURE-ALLS DISCUSSED

Montesquieu *had never known a pain or a distress that he could not soothe by half an hour of a good book;*[1] but to guarantee so much is *vendere fumos*, such promises end in smoke, and those enthusiasts who promise that books will cure all ills go too far. Better stop with Pliny, who ventured no further than to say

[1] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anth.* 386.

that there is no pain which literature cannot *alleviate*, for books are no cure-alls; only the quacks and charlatans of the market-place would say otherwise. To overstate the power of books is to do them harm and to harm those who seek restoration of health by them. *The longer I live*, said Sydney Smith, *the more I am convinced that the apothecary is of more importance than Seneca.*[1] I am not, however, unmindful of the fact that some few writers, by reason of the universality of their genius, may approximate to a universal remedy, like *Shakespeare*, who is a pharmacopœia in himself. Some would allow as much for others, as Richard Le Gallienne[2] for *Alexandre Dumas, who comes nearest of all writers to being a literary cure-all;* he is *incomparably the most useful of all writers* in *nervous diseases*, but *there is no form of sickness to which he may not be applied*, and a set of *Dumas*, he advises, is as *indispensable in a sick-room as a nurse or pure air;* for this reason, in all cases likely to be prolonged, the doctor should immediately prescribe *Dumas* whatever subsequent treatment may be necessary.

I have brought enough evidence to prove their efficacy in cases of *ennui*, megrims, melancholy, and the like, and am therefore the more emboldened to announce that even here they are not infallible. Books can do no more than open the door of consolation, but if the ingredients of consolation are not within us, how shall we be consoled? The inconsolable are beyond their reach:

> Not poppy, nor mandragora,
> Nor all the drowsy syrups of the world,
> Shall ever medicine thee to that sweet sleep
> Which thou owedst yesterday.[3]

Take, as a type, the case of Des Esseintes, who sought to ease the morbid irritations of his ingrowing consciousness by associating with all manner of strange and beautiful objects, among them, as I show in its place, unique copies of fantastic books, fearfully and wonderfully caparisoned. He pondered over his treasures as an amateur or novice adventuring among the mysteries of an apothecary's hoard. But to no satisfying

[1] *Memoir.* Holland. i, 126. [2] 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals.* 114-15. [3] *Othello.* iii, 3.

end, for content was always farther from him than it is from most of us. To change the current of his tabid emotions, and *cool his brain*, he once tried *a course of emollient reading*, and reckoning the novels of Charles Dickens among the *solanaceæ*, he resorted to them. Books of this kind, he argued, being appropriate to the delicate condition of the convalescent whom sensational stories or other works *richer in phosphates* might only fatigue, would be appropriate also to his condition. But his theory collapsed in practice. Dickens produced just the opposite effect. His lovers were too chaste, too modestly draped, too *Protestant;* their *seraphic passions*, never going beyond a *coy dropping of the eyes, a blush, a tear of happiness, a squeezing of hands, exasperated him.* This *exaggerated virtue* drove him to the other extreme. He rushed into contrary excesses of thought: set himself to imagine passionate, full-bodied loves; frailties; ardent embraces, etc. So throwing Dickens aside he banished from his thoughts the *mock-modesty of Albion*, and dreamed of licentious practices and *salacious little sins* condemned by the Church.[1]

At another time[2] he sought distraction from his tortured spirit in a Bodega wine shop within the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli, where over a glass of sherry, the *nerve-soothing stories, the gentle lenitives* of Dickens were scattered, and their place was taken by the *harsh repulsives*, the *cruel irritants* of Edgar Allan Poe; *the chill nightmare of the* '*Cask of Amontillado*', that haunting tale of the man walled-up in an underground chamber, seized upon his fancy, until even *the kindly and commonplace faces of the English and American customers who filled the hall seemed to reflect uncontrollable and abominable cravings, odious and instinctive plans of wickedness.* But perchance Des Esseintes was not in search of health, for Huysmans gives out that he was genuinely interested only in *sickly books*, those whose *health was undermined and exasperated by fever.*[3]

So, as in the pharmacopœia of doctors, what will cure one may kill another. But if any further proof of these

[1] Huysmans, *A Rebours*. Eng. Trans. Paris. 137–8. [2] *Ib.* 181. [3] *Ib.* 213.

medicinal qualities be demanded, let it be taken from the records of some inverse activities, for it has been advocated by many authorities, Doctors of Literature among them, that phylacteries have opposing or negative characters, as poisons are efficacious in some distempers, deadly in others. This danger is noted by Montaigne when acquiring *Sciences: We cannot suddenly put them into any other vessel, than our minde*, he says; *we swallow them in buying them, and goe from the market, either already affected or amended. There are some, which insteade of nourishing, doe but hinder and surcharge us; and other some, which under cover of curing, empoison us.*[1] Bulwer-Lytton was physically distressed by Buckle's *History of Civilization;*[2] Carlyle's *French Revolution*, when *a new book much in fashion*, so affected Edward FitzGerald as to impede his recovery from *influenza;*[3] Lockhart's *Scott* made Stevenson ill;[4] and Samuel Butler reports a still more serious case of a man who lined his hat-box with some sheets of Benbowe's poetry, which so strangely affected his hat that the first time he wore it afterwards he felt *a singing in his head, which within two days turned into a vertigo.* Well may Le Gallienne warn us of the risk of *prescribing the wrong author in a dangerous case:* half-hourly doses of *Keats* and *Shelley* in an attack of gout might so *accelerate the action of the heart* as to induce apoplexy.[5] But he is careful to note that patients crave for what is bad for them. Consumptives, for instance, yearn for *Maeterlinck* when they obviously need *Fielding*, *Dickens* and *Balzac*, so he warns book-doctors who have a craze for *Meredith*, *Pater*, or *Henry James*, against those potions when the patient should be given *doses of Marie Corelli.*[6]

Many authorities find religious treatises a sure remedy in several distempers, the physician *should by no means overlook the somewhat curious efficacy of sermons.*[7] But I have heard some complain of *Sermons* and other books of the kind (good otherwise) because they are too serious, too much dejecting

[1] 'Of Physiognomy', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. iii, 362. [2] *Mr. Hayward's Letters*. ii, 56. [3] *Letters and Literary Remains*. i, 42. [4] Stevenson, *Letters*. i, 301. [5] 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals*. 112–13. [6] *Ib.* 118. [7] *Ib.* 117.

men, aggravating offences. Great care and choice, much discretion are required in their application. I need do no more than mention the faith of men in the healing powers of the Holy Scriptures. If comfort may be got from Philosophy, asks Burton,[1] what shall be had from Divinity? What shall *Austin, Cyprian, Gregory, Bernard's divine meditations afford us? Nay, what shall the Scripture itself, which is like an Apothecary's Shop, wherein are all remedies for all infirmities of mind, purgatives, cordials, alteratives, corroboratives, lenitives, etc. Every disease,* saith Austin, *hath a peculiar medicine in the Scripture;* which is supported by Donne, who advises that *the whole booke of Psalmes is Oleum effusum, an Oyntment poured out upon all sorts of sores, a Sear-cloth that souples all bruises, a Balme that searches all wounds;*[2] which Amiel also supports when he confesses (in his *Journal* for July 17th, 1859) that he had *just read seven chapters of the Gospel,* and *nothing calms* him so much. Le Gallienne reminds us that *a text suspended round the neck has seemed more than equal to a bottle of medicine,* and he would not consider it *fantastic to ascribe the vigorous health of our forefathers to their constant reading of the Bible.*[3] Yet even here the remedy is not always effective. When Coleridge was very ill Scott's *Novels* were *almost the only books* he could take. *I cannot at such times read the Bible,* he confessed, *my mind reflects on it, but I can't bear the open page.*[4]

Notwithstanding all that might be advanced to these effects both *pro* and *con,* there are many records of cures in times present which I cannot ignore, although they are none of them of my experience, but borrowed from printed testimonies, and for defence I must refer to the consciences of those I take them from. How many modern books of a religious kind have this power of healing I cannot tell, but by common report the most efficacious of them is *Science and Health,* by Mrs. Baker Eddy, and to this only I shall refer. In the appendix of that work it is claimed in precise words that *thousands* of people *have been reformed and healed through the perusal or study of this book;* and eighty-five testimonies are

[1] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 108–9. [2] 'Sermons', *Selected Passages.* L. P. Smith. 23. [3] *Op. cit.* 109. [4] *Table Talk.* 298.

given from those who have benefited by this medicine. The maladies cured comprise the chief causes of human suffering: consumption, rheumatism, cancer, epilepsy, cataract, neurasthenia, deafness, Bright's disease, etc., some hereditary, others acquired. All the particular circumstances are set out and in many instances cures are alleged to have been made by a simple, yet devout, reading of a borrowed copy of the book.[1] I will say no more, but will let this epitome suffice, having broached it in keeping with my purpose, for I commonly make use of that which is rare and memorable, and every man may add his example or explanation. For my part, I neither deny nor affirm. I am interested in everything, surprised at nothing, and I am as ready as most men to snatch at some more accurate remedy than those chemical nostrums which are the broken reed of medicine. And I firmly believe with Oliver Wendell Holmes, himself a medical man, *that if the whole 'materia medica' could be sunk to the bottom of the sea, it would be all the better for mankind and all the worse for the fishes*, of which, because many observers have written whole books, I will say nothing.

It is clear then that since no physical condition is static, or, indeed, similar to any other, no specific can be universal. Le Gallienne[2] is wise in this respect and he even contests the traditional belief in laughter as a universal specific, giving as an example that of *Mark Twain*, who must be prescribed with care in cases of *bronchitis* and *other pulmonary* diseases because laughter is *apt to provoke dangerous fits of coughing*. But further data are unnecessary, a wrongly prescribed book, or an overdose of literature, being as dangerous as any other physic wrongly administered.

IV. RANGE OF THEIR MEDICINAL PROPERTIES

How far the medicinal character of books doth extend, it is hard to determine:

[1] *Science and Health.* Mary Baker Eddy. (1918.) 600–700. [2] *Op. cit.* 116.

> But ask not, to what doctors I apply.
> Sworn to no master, of no sect am I.
> As drives the storm, at any door I knock,
> And house with Montaigne now, and now
> with Locke.[1]

Yet what a variety of bookmen hold of their effects, forces and operations, I will briefly show. Dibdin reports that Haslewood swooned away at Sotheby's when a copy of his *beloved Juliana Berners was knocked down* to a rival *at the freezing price of thirty-five shillings*. He was carried out of the saleroom *speechless*, and the *fainting-fit* was succeeded by *a solid, roaring fit of gout*. He was restored to his normal health by a mixture of nine grains of *Ritson's tartar* with three tablespoonfuls of *Braithwait's emollient*.[2] Whenever Jules Janin was overcome by the ridicule of his *confrères* after he had made *a more than usually egregious blunder* in his weekly article (such as calling the lobster the *Cardinal of the Seas or describing Smyrna as one of the Greek Islands*), he would soothe his distraught feelings by *fondling his first editions bound in crushed levant by Capé or Bauzonnet*. The treatment never failed.[3]

In the opposite defect they are equally efficacious, for as *the imagination moved and tossed by some vehemence, doth cast some darts, that may offend a strange object*,[4] it is well known that an opportune shock is recommended in diverse affections both of the mind and body. For that reason physicians prescribe counter-irritants. In modern times they have taken to electricity, showing great faith in its repercussions as an alterative. Some books are capable of giving such tempestuous shocks to the intelligence, the emotions, or to both, that they disturb the bloodstream and thus induce an action which breaks up obnoxious or obstructive matter, as, in surgery, tumours and calculi are dispersed by *electrolysis*. They galvanize atrophied or awaken dormant energies, and thus release new and generous life-forces, which have been known to restore sight to the blind and to make the mute vocal.

[1] Pope, *Epistles of Horace*. I, i, 23. [2] *Bibliophobia*. 40. [3] Gosse, *The Library of Edmund Gosse*. xxi. [4] Montaigne, 'Of the Force of the Imagination', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 108.

Such phenomena are familiar also to sociologists, who have made many records of the revolution of individual and even national behaviour by book-shock. The French have a phrase, *épater les bourgeois*, which defines the process in one of its applications. It was said of Baudelaire that he slept under the bed instead of on it, to shock the middle classes, and Bernard Shaw's explosive wit was *avowedly designed to shock, prod and irritate the social consciousness of the bourgeoisie into practical moral zeal.*[1] But read more of this in my section of the *Fear of Books*.

There are as many varieties of these effects as there are emotional states, as fear, joy, sorrow, etc. Two remarkable instances are given by Aulus Gellius[2] out of *Herodotus*.[3] The first tells of the dumb son of King Crœsus, who, seeing his father in danger of death, was so shocked as to make a great effort to cry out to the enemy, and by doing so created in himself the power of speech and thus saved the King's life; the second tells of an athlete of Samos, by name Echeklous, who was speechless from birth and came to speak through an effort to expose cheating in the casting of lots between the Samians and their opponents. Erasmus laughed so violently on reading the *Epistolae Obscurorum Virorum*, a work written by Hottenius to expose the literary and moral errors and absurdities of the monks, and condemned to the flames by Leo X, *that he broke an imposthume, for which he was to have undergone an operation.*[4] Many such instances must lie buried in the histories of famous bibliophiles, but none more to my point than that of Peiresc, who, being *smitten with paralysis*, was restored by hearing a newly-arrived song in which a troubadour poet had celebrated the loves of the Lily and the Rose. He had lost all power of speech, but he was so greatly moved to express his liking for the song that words came to him, and *he forthwith uttered them, and at that very moment his limbs were all freed from the palsie.*[5] Of a like kind, being allied with the same causes, are those instances of transmutation

[1] 'Shocking as a Fine Art', *The Eighteen-Nineties*, Holbrook Jackson. 5th ed. 131. [2] v, 9. (Loeb Ed. i, 403–5.) [3] i, 85. [4] Beloe, *Anecdotes*, i, 93–4. [5] Qt. Dobson, *De Libris*. 247.

by imaginative force which are familiar in our histories. Two of these I give for a taste, out of the authority of *Montaigne*. The first tells of a young girl, born near Pisa, who was *all shagd and hairy over and over*, by reason of the impression made upon her mother by *an image of Saint John Baptist, that was so painted, and hung over her bed.* The second he gives out of his own domestic experience: *There was lately seene a cat about my owne house, so earnestly eyeing a bird, sitting upon a tree, that he seeing the cat, they both so wistly fixed their looks one upon another, so long, that at last, the bird fell downe as dead in the Cat's pawes, either drunken by his owne strong imagination, or drawne by some attractive power of the Cat.*[1] But I must end these citations, and get back to books.

V. A DIVERSITY OF CURES

I may now give some particulars of their beneficent dispensations among invalids, making peace and pleasure counteract pain, as when Bulwer-Lytton found relief from influenza by reading the *Autobiography of Mrs. Piozzi*, which Mr. Hayward, Q.C., its editor, had sent him.[2] Miss Berry, during an illness at Little Strawberry, found comfort in such diverse works as *Wraxall* and *Montaigne*.[3] William Hazlitt[4] recommends *Tom Jones* as an excellent good physic against *indigestion;* and, more recently, that scrupulous annalist, Arnold Bennett, reports[5] that some plays of Labiche, which he had bought cheap, *certainly did something* to cure a stubborn attack of *neuralgia* from which he was suffering. Robert Louis Stevenson found the *Adventures of Sherlock Holmes* soothing when he suffered from the toothache, and on another occasion it relieved a pleurisy: *it will interest you as a medical man to know*, he told Dr. Conan Doyle, *that the cure was for the moment effectual.*[6] Richard Le Gallienne knows of a long-standing case of *asthma* cured by Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, and he has found Victor

[1] 'Of the Force of the Imagination', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 109. [2] *Mr. Hayward's Letters*. ii, 56. [3] *Letters*. Lewis. ii, 74. [4] 'The Sick Chamber', *New Monthly Magazine*. August 1830. [5] *Diary*. [6] *Letters*. ii, 286–7.

Hugo's works efficacious in the same disease;[1] whilst he advises *a course of Shakespeare* for gout, having great faith in the curative properties of *the crystalline air that blows about the peaks of the masterpieces;* and in all doubtful cases he prescribes *Alexandre Dumas;*[2] another witness finds like benefits from *Ben Jonson* or *Robert Burton*, whenever *a cold or other cause stays* him *in bed.*[3]

Dr. O'Rell, as Eugene Field records, included books in his dispensary and prescribed them confidently. A favourite was the *Noctes Ambrosianae*, and once when Eugene Field was stricken with melancholia through the loss of a coveted *Elzevir* at auction, O'Rell administered doses of Father Prout's *Rogueries of Tom Moore* and Kit North's debate with the Ettrick Shepherd, with such good effect that the patient was effectively cured and within forty-eight hours he was hunting again and picked up on a bookstall, *for a mere song*, a first edition of *Special Providences in New England.*[4]

But even when a book can make no direct cure its power to soothe mind and body after or during pain is recognized by all the authorities. Thornton Wilder brings some evidence in support of this in the case of the Archbishop of Lima. This good man had exchanged the *Fathers* and *Councils*, in whom he had been deeply versed, for *the libertine masterpieces of Italy and France*, which he *re-read annually*. These works proved of great value as restoratives, for *even in the torments of the stone (happily dissolved by drinking the water from the springs of Santa Maria de Cluxambugua) he could find nothing more nourishing than the anecdotes of Brantôme and the divine Aretino.*[5] Aubrey Beardsley, during the consumption which killed him, was relieved of much distress by reading *Diderot* and Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, and the *Works* of Friedrich Nietzsche made him feel *quite gay*.[6] An old doctor once came to Oliver Wendell Holmes with *a contrivance for people with broken knee-pans*, and recognising that a mind agreeably employed disposes the body towards health, *he mentioned, in his written*

[1] 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals*. 116. [2] *Ib*. 114. [3] Malcolm Macmillan, *Letters*. 141. [4] Field, *Love Affairs of a Bibliomaniac*. 179. [5] *Bridge of San Luis Rey*. 102. [6] *Last Letters*. 21–2.

account of his contrivance, various works which might serve that purpose, among them *Don Quixote, Tom Jones*, and *Watts on the Mind*.[1] We can well believe that when Mark Rutherford *lay dangerously ill of pneumonia*, his recovery was aided and abetted because he *lay quite still* whilst his nurse read *Jane Austen* to him,[2] *for in cases of lingering convalescence* books are *invaluable*.[3]

When an Arab is bitten by a poisonous snake, his friends resort to the *Koran*, reading certain passages over him; if these are the correct passages, the sufferer lives; if not, he dies.[4] So have ills been cured in our land and time by the silent recital of inspired passages from poet or philosopher. Ruskin attributes his resilience in the face of repeated attacks of brain fever to *Virgil*. Through all such troubles, which irritated his later years, he was enabled to hold out and recover by *having always murmured in my ears, at every new trial, one Latin line*,[5]

Tu ne cede malis, sed contra audentior ito.[6]

Yield not to any ills, but go all the bolder to face them.

Richard de Bury will have that even obsolete books, when their *rank barbarism* is *digested*, may *heal the pectoral arteries with the gift of eloquence*.[7] Nor need we wonder at him, for a book is no dead thing:

The thing 's restorative
I' the touch and sight.[8]

Experience teaches us that reading is not always necessary. Books may affect one as much by sight as by reading. They cure by their presence, composing or stimulating the mind or the emotions of those who do no more than gaze upon them. *To cast mine eye upon good Authors*, said John Donne, *kindles and refreshes* the mind, provoking agreeable meditations.[9] Montaigne did not pretend to read all his books: it was sufficient to have them near him. *In effect*, he says,[10] *I make no*

[1] *The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table*. (1902.) 151. [2] *The Groombridge Diary*. 78. [3] 'Book-Love', *Fraser's Magazine*. 1847. [4] *With Lawrence in Arabia*. Lowell Thomas. 196. [5] Sir Edward Cook, *More Literary Recreations*. 77–8. [6] *Aen*. vi, 95. [7] *Philobiblon*. viii. [8] Browning, *Ring and the Book*. i, 89–90. [9] Letter to A. V. Merced. 1609. [10] 'Of Three Commerces or Societies', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. iii, 53.

other use of them, than those who know them not. I enjoy them, as a miser doth his gold; to know, that I may enjoy them when I list; my minde is setled and satisfied by the right of possession. He never travelled without them in peace or war, yet passed many days and months without using them. *It shall be anon, say I, or to-morrow, or when I please; in the meane while the time runnes away, and passeth without hurting me. For it is wonderfull, what repose I take, and how I continue in this consideration, that they are at my elbow to delight me when time shall serve. . . . This is the best munition I have found in this humane peregrination.* Dr. Folliott, in T. L. Peacock's *Crotchet Castle*,[1] supports Montaigne: *nothing more fit to be looked at than the outside of a book; it is a resource against ennui, if ennui should come upon you*, and, he goes on, even if the medicine is unnecessary, *to have the resource and not to feel the ennui, to enjoy your bottle in the present, and your book in the indefinite future, is a delightful condition of human existence;* which John Skelton has sung:

> It would have màde a man whole that had been right sickly
> To behold how it was garnished and bound.[2]

This argument finds some support also in Dibdin,[3] where he tells how, when Dr. Gossen lay on a bed of sickness, the first *Complutensian Polyglot Bible* of Cardinal Ximenes, *in its original binding*, was brought to him *to work a cure;* though whether it was efficacious to that end or not, he omits to say.

VI. THE CURE OF MEGRIMS, MELANCHOLY AND LIKE DISTEMPERS

Nothing is more established in the pharmacopœia of books than their power to relieve and even cure melancholy. A great volume could be filled with instances, of which I shall recite a few. When Madame de Sévigné was beleaguered in her country house by *rain interrupted only by storms*, she was *devoured by melancholy*, and kept alive only by reading.[4] *If I were in the country, and were distressed with that malady*, said

[1] Chap. vii. [2] *Replycacion against Scolers.* [3] *Reminiscences.* i, 206. [4] *Letters.* i, 168–9.

Dr. Johnson, *I would force myself to take a book; and every time I did it I should find it the easier. Melancholy*, he adds, *should be diverted by every means but drinking*.[1] Montaigne[2] and many others have asserted the value of books for the relief of ill-humours, megrims, *tedium vitae*, blue devils, dumps, etc. *To divert me from any importunate imagination or insinuating conceit*, he declares, *there is no better way than to have recourse unto bookes: with ease they allure mee to them, and with facilitie they remove them all.* For him that is *overrun with solitariness, or carried away* with *pleasing melancholy* and *vain conceits*, or who knows not how to *spend his time*, or is *crucified with worldly care*, Robert Burton prescribes *study*[3] (provided always that the malady proceed not from overmuch of it), for he well knew, out of his own experience, when he spent so many happy and solitary hours in Bodley's Library compiling his great treatise on *Melancholy*, that, as a later poet hath it, books

> Are not companions—they are solitudes;
> We lose ourselves in them and all our cares.[4]

Let him take heed he do not overstretch his wits, and make a *skeleton* of himself. He warns also such *Inamoratos* as read nothing but playbooks, idle poems, jests, *Amadis of Gaul, the Knights of the Sun, the Seven Champions, Palmerin de Oliva, Huon of Bordeaux*, for such folk many times in the end prove as mad as *Don Quixote*.

Study Burton prescribes only for those who are idle, troubled in mind, or carried headlong with vain thoughts, *to distract their cogitations*. Nothing in such cases better than *the healing influence of studious pursuits to soothe and abstract*.[5] *Semper aliquid memoriter ediscant*, saith Piso, let them learn something without book, transcribe, translate, read the Scriptures, which Hyperius[6] holds sufficient of itself: *animus levatur inde a curis multa quiete et tranquillitate fruens*, the mind is erected thereby from all worldly cares, and has much quiet and tranquillity. *Reading is to the mind what exercise is to the*

[1] *Life*. Ed. Hill. iii, 5. [2] 'Of Commerces', etc., *Essays*. Seccombe. iii, 52. [3] *Anat. of Melan.* (1904.) ii, 107. [4] P. J. Bailey, *Festus*. [5] Lamb, 'Poor Relations', *Last Essays of Elia*. [6] *De quotid. Script. lec.* f. 77.

body;[1] 'tis the best nepenthe, surest cordial, sweetest alterative, presentest diverter. Rhasis enjoins continual conference to such melancholy men, perpetual discourse of some history, tale, poem, or news, *alternos sermones edere ac bibere, aeque jocundum quam cibus sive potus,*[2] which feedeth the mind as meat and drink the body, and pleaseth as much. We gather *virtue* from a *fable* or an *allegory*, says Steele,[3] as *health* by *hunting;* they rectify by *an agreeable pursuit that draws us on with pleasure*, making us insensible of fatigues. They bear us up, when we would sink in the sea of melancholy, help us

To swim with bladders of philosophy.[4]

Ferdinand and Alphonso, Kings of Aragon and Sicily, were both cured by reading the Histories, one of *Curtius*, the other of *Livy*, which no prescribed physic could replace.[5] Camerarius relates as much of Lorenzo de Medici. Heathen philosophers are so full of divine precepts that, as some think, they are able alone to settle a distressed mind. *Sunt verba et voces, quibus hunc lenire dolorem etc.,*[6] such are in *Epictetus*, *Plutarch*, and *Seneca*. *Qualis ille, quae tela*, saith Lipsius, *adversus omnes animi casus administrat, & ipsam mortem, quomodo vitia eripit, infert virtutes!*[7] When I read *Seneca, methinks I am beyond all human fortunes, on the top of an hill above mortality.*[8] *Plutarch* said as much of *Homer*, for which cause Niceratus, in *Xenophon*,[9] was made by his parents to con Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* without book, *ut in virum bonum evaderet*, as well to make him good and honest as to avoid idleness. Luther's *Commentary* healed the spiritual wounds, comforted the afflicted consciences, and relieved the tormented minds, of Bunyan and his friends.[10] Francis Bacon[11] gives out that *it were too long to go over the particular remedies which learning* (and

[1] Steele, *Tatler*. 147. [2] *Ser*. 38. *ad Fratres Erem*. [3] *Op. cit*. 147. [4] Rochester, *A Satire Against Mankind*. [5] Bodin, *Praefat. ad meth. hist*. [6] 'There are words and sounds with which this grief may be assuaged.' Horace. I *Ep*. i, 34. [7] 'What a man is he, what weapons doth he furnish against all affections of the mind, and against death itself, how he removes vices and implants virtues!' [8] Lipsius, *Symposium*. iii, 5. [9] *Symposium*. iii, 5. [10] Mark Rutherford, *Bunyan*. 106. [11] *Advancement of Learning*.

he means book-learning) *doth minister to all the diseases of the mind; sometimes*, he goes on, *purging the ill humours, sometimes opening the obstructions, sometimes helping digestion, sometimes increasing appetite, sometimes healing the wounds and exulcerations thereof, and the like.* Weighed down with years and the spectacle of human folly, Thomas Carlyle found a prophylactic in *Plutarch*, who composed *the ruffled hair* of his *back in a sensible degree*, smoothing down *the loud inanity of many fools and idiots.*[1]

Hesiod held, and Macaulay after him marked the passage with three lines in his own copy of the poet,[2] that *if to one whose grief is fresh, as he sits silent with sorrow-stricken heart, a minstrel, the henchman of the Muses, celebrates the men of old and the Gods who possess Olympus, straightway he forgets his Melancholy, and remembers not at all his grief, beguiled by the blessed gift of the goddesses of song:*[3]

> εἰ γάρ τις καὶ πένθος ἔχων νεοκηδὲϊ θυμῷ
> ἄζηται κραδίην ἀκαχήμενος, αὐτὰρ ἀοιδὸς
> Μουσάων θεράπων κλεῖα προτέρων ἀνθρώπων
> ὑμνήσῃ, μάκαράς τε θεοὺς οἳ Ὄλυμπον ἔχουσι,
> αἶψ' ὅ γε δυσφρονέων ἐπιλήθεται, οὐδέ τι κηδεών
> μέμνηται, ταχέως δὲ παρέτραπε δῶρα θεάων.

Pliny the Younger would fly to his books, which were the *sovereign composers* of his grief;[4] and it was to books that the modern philosopher, Benedetto Croce,[5] turned when weighed down by the weakening of his faith. *As a sick man searches for medicine* he went to books on *apologetics*, but since these left him *cold*, he turned to *the words of truly religious minds*, and so *found comfort.* Charles James Fox called poetry *the great refreshment of the human mind*, and after *ruining himself at cards, he could sit down and derive an instant solace from Theocritus;*[6] and Lord Rosebery gives Mr. Gladstone as an example of a happy man, *one of the main sources of whose happiness was his bookishness.*[7] When Sir Humphrey Davy needed consolation

[1] *New Letters.* ii, 322. [2] *Life and Letters.* Trevelyan. ii, 378. [3] *Theog.* 98–103. [4] 'Studia unicum doloris levamentum.' *Letters.* Melmoth. Loeb. Ed. viii, 19. [5] *An Autobiography.* Trans. R. G. Collingwood. 35. [6] Rosebery, *Appreciations and Addresses.* 159. [7] *Ib.* 169.

from the tedium of a journey he flew not to inn or posting-house, but to his books,[1] thus supporting Jeremy Collier, that books *help us to forget the crossness of men and things.*[2]

Macaulay read himself out of the profound melancholy of a great bereavement. *Even now, I dare not, in the intervals of business, remain alone for a minute without a book in my hand.*[3] Well may he have argued at another time that *an interesting book acted as an anodyne;*[4] in which he has Sir Walter Scott's[5] support, where he says, *muddling among old books has the quality of a sedative, and saves the tear and wear of an overwrought brain.* James Payn goes so far as to call books *the blessed chloroform of the mind,*[6] and Richard Le Gallienne *can imagine painful operations being performed with no other anæsthetic than a chapter or two from the lives of D'Artagnan or Bussy D'Amboise.*[7] But if he and some other sceptics will not grant them power to act as anodynes in physical distress, they will not deny them power to heal broken hearts, to weld them as few other specifics could. They can *emolliently affect the nervous system,*[8] and are prime tests of sanity. William Cory took up Sidgwick's *Ethics* now and then to test whether his brain was *softening.*[9] They can help keep *the head from crazing and the heart from breaking;*[10] for evidence of which read the story of how Henri IV of France fled for consolation to his books when abandoned by Gabrielle d'Estrèes,[11] and that of Macaulay, whose *life and reason* were saved by *literature* when they were endangered by the death of his beloved sister.[12]

VII. SPECIFIC FOR TEDIUM VITAE

Tom Hood found his *burden* in life lightened by a *load of books.* How this came about he expounds by the parable of the Kilkenny cats, which fought until they devoured one

[1] Tom Hood, *Letter to the Manchester Athenæum.* [2] *Essays upon several moral Subjects.* [3] *Life and Letters.* i, 387. [4] *Ib.* ii, 401. [5] *Journal.* ii, 259. [6] *Chambers's Journal.* 1864. [7] 'Books as Doctors', *Attitudes and Avowals.* 115. [8] Locker, *My Confidences.* 216. [9] *Letters and Journals.* 445. [10] Hood, *Letter to the Manchester Athenæum.* 1843. [11] *The Great Book-Collectors.* Elton. 108. [12] *Life and Letters.* i, 387.

another. *It is not so generally known*, he adds, *that they left behind them an orphan kitten which, true to the breed, began to eat itself up, till it was diverted from the operation by a mouse.* He goes on to compare the human mind, under vexation, to that kitten. The mind is apt to prey upon itself, *unless drawn off by a new object; and none better for the purpose than a book; for example, one of Defoe's; for who, in reading his thrilling 'History of the Great Plague', would not be reconciled to a few little ones?*[1] Viscount Morley of Blackburn found literature a great restorative in many ill-humours, and he claims for *Wordsworth* that *he repairs the daily wear and tear, puts back what the fret of the day has rubbed thin or rubbed off*, sending *us forth in the morning whole.*[2] General Garfield would agree, for, when President of the United States, he refreshed himself by learning all the Congressional Library could tell him about *Horace* and the various editions and translations of his poems.[3]

It is this quality which ensures that curative consolation which books above all things made by men bring to the sick-room. How they have soothed pain, relieved tedium, engaged the mind and cheered the heart of the invalid is well known. No extension of what is already known and what has already been said is necessary. Books bring relief to anguish by opposing thought to pain, and, by thus releasing the healing forces of Nature herself, permit her to do her good work. They are infallible distractors, and therefore as good as a doctor. *Pain and sickness* are *charmed away by them.*[4] They are certain prophylactics against that *ennui* which reduces the vitality and exposes us to the attacks of disease, for they create interest in life, which in itself is now a recognized tonic both for individuals and nations, who may be thus saved from being bored to death. *Interest in life*, says Rivers, *is the primary factor in the welfare of a people.*[5] That which banishes boredom promotes health and prolongs life. One holds that *the companionship of books is unquestionably one of the greatest antidotes*

[1] Hood, *Letter to the Manchester Athenæum.* 1843. [2] *Recollections.* i, 387. [3] *Book-Lore.* i, 44. [4] John Aikin, *Letters from a Father to his Son.* [5] 'The Psychological Factor', *Depopulation of Melanesia.* W. H. R. Rivers. 96.

to the ravages of time, and study is better than all medical formulas for the prolongation of life;[1] which is no more than the belief of Richard Whitlock that *the Book-worme is of all Creatures the longest lived, the last in every Age living all the former, to whose Age Methusalems was but Nonage.*[2] If thou art sick of soul, thy heart heavy, thy mind distressed, thou mayest happily recover by a regimen of books; no better spiritual pick-me-ups:

> If hipped my G. or languid you should feel,
> There are worse things than a course of Steele.[3]

Books enabled that moodiest of essayists, Hazlitt, to get through the year *without ever knowing what it* was *to feel ennui.*[4] He and others have found them tonics in convalescence, and at such times as the spirit is in reduced circumstances. This quality is well authenticated of some particular books. *Plato, like mountain air, sharpens our organs, and gives us an appetite for wholesome food;*[5] whilst *Epictetus*, says Dowden,[6] proved both *tonic* and *styptic* to Southey, when other writers had discommoded his *nervous sensibility*. Many have resorted to the poets with like success: *Homer rolling along in the hexameter or trumpeted by Pope, will give one a hot glow of pleasure and raise a finer throb in the pulse.*[7]

VIII. BOOKS AS SOPORIFICS

As soporifics, promoters of *sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleave of care*,[8] they are of proved value. *Sometimes*, says a reliable witness,[9] *we read for a while and then feel as though we could peacefully go to sleep. Sometimes we struggle desperately to gum our failing attention to the acute analysis and deductions of our author. Our eyes squint and swim. Our head dizzies. We*

[1] Roberts, *Book-Hunter in London*. xxii. [2] *Zootomia*. 244. [3] Inscribed by Austin Dobson in a copy of his *Selections from Steele*, presented to Sir Edmund Gosse. *The Library of Edmund Gosse*. 93. [4] *Letters on the Dramatic Literature of the Age of Elizabeth*. [5] Joubert, *Selected Thoughts*. Trans. Lyttleton. 181. [6] *Southey*. 28. [7] Harrison, *Choice of Books*. 29. [8] *Macbeth*. ii, 2. [9] Squire, 'Reading in Bed', *Life at the Mermaid*. 119–20.

feel drunk, and, dropping the book from loose hands, just manage to get the light out before falling back into a dense and miry slumber. Those neat lines of Alexander Pope tell us the same:

> Soft creeping, words on words, the sense compose,
> At ev'ry line they stretch, they yawn, they doze.
> As to soft gales top-heavy pines bow low
> Their heads, and lift them as they cease to blow:
> Thus oft they rear, and oft the head decline,
> As breathe, or pause, by fits, the airs divine.
> And now to this side, now to that they nod,
> As verse, or prose, infuse the drowzy God.[1]

They contain *many a powerful opiate to soothe us into a sweet and temporary forgetfulness.*[2] *The greater part of bibliographical works,* Dibdin advises,[3] out of Lambinet (*Recherches, etc.* Intro. X), are *dry and soporific.* Coleridge finds Southey's *blank verse odes* so soporific that he will have *they are to poetry what dumb-bells are to music; they can be read only for exercise, or to make a man tired that he may be sleepy.*[4] And as the mere presence of books is a remedy in some ailments, so also the mere sound of them induces sleep. Gautier gives out[5] that *le bruit des feuilles tombant l'une sur l'autre invite immanquablement au sommeil,* the fall of the leaves one upon the other invites slumber, and sleep is, *après la mort, la meilleure chose de la vie.* Nothing so comforting as reading oneself to sleep. The better the book the better the effect. There are many instances.

Once upon a time, Taine and Renan spent a holiday together beside a lake in Savoy. On one occasion Renan had no desire to walk, so Taine *settled him comfortably under a tree,* with a volume of Balzac for company. Taine then took a walk. *When he returned Renan had fallen asleep, and Balzac had fallen into the water.* How Dorothy Wordsworth read her brother William to sleep when the bard was overwrought with meditation or the composition of poetry is common knowledge. All manner of books were used by her for this

[1] *Dunciad.* ii, 389–96. [2] 'Book-Lore', *Fraser's Magazine.* 1847. [3] *Bibliomania.* Ed. 1811. 30. [4] *Letters.* Ed. E. H. Coleridge. i, 108. [5] Pref. *Les Jeunes-France.*

purpose and nearly always with success. She read to him *The Lover's Complaint* when he was in bed and *left him composed;*[1] she read him to sleep in the morning when he was *worn out* with *a bad night's rest*, but she does not name the book, although she records having composed herself afterwards with *the first book of 'Paradise Lost'*.[2] The remedy, however, was not always reliable, for at another time she sat by his bedside and read to him in *The Pleasures of Hope*, and *he could not fall asleep*.[3]

It is often rumoured that Wordsworth's works themselves have soporific qualities. A. E. Newton has a story of a man who took *The Excursion* as a sleeping-draught with great success. He kept a volume at his bedside, took it up in wakeful moments, and was *soon in a profound slumber*.[4] But all are not of his opinion. John Stuart Mill valued Wordsworth's *Poems* for their tonic qualities; they proved for him *a medicine* which reacted upon both the *mind* and *feelings, because of their power of expressing not mère outward beauty, but states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty*.[5] But when all is said, the best soporifics are long draughts of erudition weighted with pedantry, as Amiel testifies after *three hours* with Lotze's *big volume*, '*Geschichte der Aesthetik in Deutschland*', which begins attractively, but soon falls into a monotony, producing *yawning, because*, as he owns, *the noise of a mill-wheel sends one to sleep, and these pages without paragraphs, these interminable chapters, and this incessant dialectical clatter, affect me as though I were listening to a word-mill*.[6]

[1] *Journals of Dorothy Wordsworth*. i, 118. [2] *Ib*. i, 83. [3] *Ib*. 86. [4] *A Magnificent Farce*. 144. [5] *Autobiography*. 148. [6] *Amiel's Journal*. Trans. Ward. 139.

PART XV

THE ORIGIN OF A SPECIES

I. TRANSMUTATION

We need not marvel that books change and translate, as well as uplift, their readers; we are transfigured by them, their wisdom, music, passion, mingle with our blood and quicken it, giving us like moments of magnificence,

> And let the multitudinous music of Greek
> Pass into me, till I am musical.[1]

How many transmutations books have brought about in the soul of man I cannot reckon; it would need great volumes to record the influence of holy books alone, and I shall not attempt it, as their power in this kind has so many historians. Secular or profane letters have as many victories, but they do not get the same advertisement. This chapter has several instances. But in order to reveal still more the variety of their operations I may relate how the tales of Gautier converted George Moore to Paganism. *I am what they made me*, he confesses.[2] Shelley had given him belief in humanity, pity for the poor, hatred of injustice, love, faith. *Gautier destroyed these illusions*, teaching him that *our boasted progress is but a pitfall into which the race is falling*, and that *the correction of form is the highest ideal*. He accepted *the simple conscience of the pagan world*, and would have held down his thumbs in the Coliseum *that a hundred gladiators might die* and *wash* him *free* of his *Christian soul with their blood*.

When he read *Thomson*, William Godwin believed that he became Thomson; when he read *Milton* he became Milton;[3] Sara Fielding read *Clarissa* and became *like the Harlowe's servant*, speechless;[4]

[1] Digby Mackworth Dolben, *Poems*. 23. [2] *Confessions of a Young Man*. (1904.) 70. [3] *The Inquirer*. [4] *Correspondence of Richardson*. Barbauld. ii, 60.

> With Egypt's Queen once more we sail the Nile
> And learn how worlds are bartered for a smile.[1]

The lover of reading, says Leigh Hunt, *will derive agreeable terror from 'Sir Bertram' and the 'Haunted Chamber'; will assent with delighted reason to every sentence in Mrs. Barbauld's 'Essay'; will feel himself wandering into solitudes with 'Gray'; shake hands with honest 'Sir Roger de Coverley'; be ready to embrace 'Parson Adams', and to chuck 'Pounce' out of the window instead of the hat; will travel with 'Marco Polo' and 'Mungo Park'; stay at home with 'Thomson'; retire with 'Cowley'; be industrious with 'Hutton'; sympathising with 'Gay and Mrs. Inchbald'; laughing with (and at) 'Buncle'; melancholy, and forlorn, and self-restored, with the shipwrecked mariner of 'De Foe'.*[2] *I lift Homer,* brags Alexander Smith, in his *Dreamthorp, and I shout with Achilles in the trenches.* Spenser's *Faerie Queene makes us feel that without stepping a yard from our native English ground, or deserting any of our common occupations, we may be, ay and must be, engaged in a great fight with invisible enemies, and that we have invisible champions on our side.*[3] So also Dr. Arnott,[4] who upheld his books as the *miracle* of all his *possessions, more wonderful than the wishing-cap of the Arabian tales,* for they transported him on an instant *not only to all places, but to all times.* When William Hazlitt[5] re-read *Peregrine Pickle* or *Tom Jones twenty years were struck off the list;* he became *a child again: Oh! what a privilege to let this hump, like Christian's burthen, drop from off one's back, and transport oneself, by the help of a little musty duodecimo, to the time when 'ignorance was bliss';* for as Sir Thomas Overbury sings:

> Books are a part of man's prerogative,
> In formal ink they thoughts and voices hold,
> That we to them our solitude may give,
> And make time present travel that of old.
> Our life, Fame pieceth longer at the end.
> And Books it farther backward do extend.

Their grace to this end is well known and sufficient, and

[1] Bulwer-Lytton, 'The Souls of Books'. [2] Intro. *A Book for a Corner.* [3] Maurice, *Friendship of Books.* 17. [4] *Elements of Physics.* [5] 'On Reading Old Books', *The Plain Speaker.* 67–68.

they concern and help every man in like case, provided that he own an innate if hitherto unapprehended graciousness which may answer to theirs, and the good fortune to apply the *right book at the right moment;* for though *Peregrine Pickle* or *Tom Jones* make so gentle a metamorphosis in the cosmogony of a Hazlitt, they might have a reverse effect in one differently constituted, as I have discoursed in its place. But this much I will supererogate, namely, that the good bookman will seek out that food which is best suited to his capacity, and he will be guided by an inborn sense or instinct of self-preservation; for if, as Ben Jonson[1] well taxeth, *there be some men are born only to suck out the poison of books*, so there are others who suck out only good, and who have ever found in books those essences most fitting for their needs. Time and circumstances will invite the book. It matters little whether they turn to *The Compleat Angler*, which Charles Lamb states[2] it would *sweeten a man's temper at any time* to read, or the irascible *Carlyle*, to whom the cobbler of Condalkin in Ireland always turned when he was *wild* with his *neighbours;*[3] but whether it made him wilder or less wild is not told. In the meantime I may say that the wildest authors have often restored insurrectionary spirits to a gentle calm by giving them revolt by proxy, as Uncle Toby and Corporal Trim appeased their own martial perturbations by means of military books and the fortifications and dispositions of imaginary troops which those essays suggested; but apart from all this power to calm and soothe, books glorify and enhance by their presence. *Gentlemen*, Dibdin claims, *look more like gentlemen* when fine books *are spread out in rich magnificence before them.*[4]

No end to the power of the written word. Han Yu, the Chinese poet and statesman, is said to have driven away a great crocodile which was ravaging the water-courses of the province of Kwangtung, by composing a *denunciatory ultimatum* (still revered as a model of Chinese composition) which he threw into the river, together with a pig and a

[1] 'Timber, or Discoveries.' *Works.* Cunningham. iii, 403. [2] Letter to Coleridge. 28.x.1796. [3] W. B. Yeats, *The Trembling of the Veil.* 98. [4] *Bibliophobia.* 32.

goat.[1] Dibdin speaks of a large party kept in perfect good humour, when dinner was *full twenty-seven minutes* late, by turning over an extra-illustrated copy of Ormerod's *Cheshire;* but no ordinary work could serve in such a crisis. You may try a *Chronicle* printed by *Verard*, or Gratian's *Decretals* by Eggesteyn, but they won't do; the ladies throw a freezing glance; the elderly gentlemen yawn; only *embellished* volumes will serve, *missals, radiant with burnished gold*, or topography illustrated like *Ormerod.*[2] Well did Queen Elizabeth ordain that in all churches there should be a desk with a copy of *The Paraphrase* of Erasmus placed in a convenient position for the people to read while waiting for the service.[3]

II. HOW BOOKS HAVE MADE AND CHANGED CHARACTER

How reasonable it is to affirm or conceive that books have powers beyond that of all other things created by man, even of man himself, I leave to the authors and patrons of that fancy to imagine; for my part I hold that books are no more than men and no less, whatever may be said for or against them; and if, as we read in *Oliver Wendell Holmes,*[4] *society is a strong solution of books*, man, being the social unit, can be no less, although what he puts in a book is rarely the whole of him; a book contains no more than what its author chooses to confess, even though he is out to confess everything. Yet books are humanity in print, and cannot be less human for their humanity, which is ever prone to prefer illusion to reality. Books have all the faults and virtues of men, they are higher than the apish, lower than the angelic; they rise with man to Heaven and sink with him to Hell, and all the circles of exaltation and depravity are recorded and revealed in a Testament compact of *Dante* and *Milton*, *Montaigne* and *Shakespeare*, *Aretino* and *Macchiavelli*, *Thomas à Kempis* and *Job*, *Rabelais* and the *Marquis de Sade*. No further go, all of

[1] *Chinese Biog. Dict.* Giles. 255. [2] *Bibliophobia.* 43. [3] Janin, *Le Livre.* xxii. [4] *The Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.* (1902.) 57.

man and everyman are there, the rest embroidery for your delight, information for your instruction, particularities for peculiar and special gustation. What they will do to you, what effect they will have, what influence, none can say until they have done their work, for we are all the same and all different; let us judge by results; we shall know them when we see them.

Books move the heart, as all know; they stir the blood: *here is a book*, said R. L. Stevenson[1] of *The Egoist, to send the blood into men's faces;* they affect and cure; exalt, uplift, distress, deprave, depress, according to circumstance of time, place, or person; that is the upshot of the business; they are not sovereign prophylactics for all symptoms and conditions; sometimes they are positive, sometimes negative; mood, state, atmosphere, place, etc. playing their part: leave it at that, *quantum sufficit*. Nonsense has been written about them *ad nauseam*, to no good end, almost as much about them as in them: *to listen to some people, you might almost fancy it was within their power to build a barricade of books, and sit behind it mocking the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune;* all of which, or nearly all, he concludes, is but a vain pretence.[2] None the less, their power to persuade men and move nations is obvious to all.

If it be true that books can change the character of nations, and that, as Fontenelle holds,[3] a continuous course of reading Greek books would in the end make us as Greek as a succession of marriages with Greek women, they can no less affect individuals. *How many a man*, exclaims Thoreau,[4] *has dated a new era in his life from the reading of a book*. Such a record would fill a volume and encompass all history, for *in every man's memory, with the hours when life culminated are usually associated certain books which met his views*.[5] Some books, such as *Richard Feverel* and *Resurrection*, Mary Coleridge proclaims, are like experiences, *you are not quite the same after you have read* them

[1] *Art of Writing*. 86. [2] Augustine Birrell, Pref. to *Book-Hunter in Paris*. Uzanne. Intro. vii. [3] *Œuvres*. (1790.) v, 280–3. Cited, Allier, *Mind of the Savage*. 2. [4] *Walden*. Scott Lib. 106. [5] Emerson, *Letters and Social Aims*. 129.

as you were before.[1] *A book, like a person,* says Walter Pater,[2] *has its fortunes with one; is lucky or unlucky in its falling in our way, and often by some happy accident counts with us for something more than its independent value;* which is no wonder, for from particular books *come subtle influences which give stability to character and help to give a man a sane outlook on the complex problems of life.*[3]

Men of action as well as men of letters and men of affairs have at some time in their lives been influenced by a book, by a mere phrase in a book, to become new men or to enter into a new phase, era, call it what you will, nearer their heart's desire, nearer the true course of their destiny: *many times the reading of a book has made the fortune of a man, has decided his way of life.*[4] No more perspicuous examples could I cite than those of Don Quixote of La Mancha, who turned Knight-errant and went out into the world in quest of adventures under the influence of those romantic tales which he continually read, and Robert of Anjou, King of Naples and Jerusalem, who was of a *dull and sluggish* temper until *a spark was kindled in his mind by the fables of Aesop,* and from that moment he became a student of the *Schoolmen* and a collector of books.[5]

Sir William Macnaghten, the hero and victim of *the darkest episode in our Indian history,* declared that reading *Clarissa,* under Macaulay's influence, was *nothing less than an epoch in his life.*[6] *No time in life when books do not influence men.*[7] St. Augustine in his *Confessions*[8] tells how, in his nineteenth year, he fell upon a book of *Cicero—et usitato iam discendi ordine perveneram in librum cuiusdam Ciceronis*—called *Hortensius;* which with its exhortation to philosophy, *mutavit affectum meum, et ad te ipsum, domine, mutavit preces meas, et vota ac desideria mea fecit alia,* altered his affection, *turned my prayers to thee, O Lord,* gave him clean aims and desires. It inflamed him,

[1] *Gathered Leaves.* 255. [2] *Marius the Epicurean.* i, 69. [3] Sir William Osler, *Life.* Cushing. ii, 23. [4] Emerson, Address at Concord. 1873. [5] Tatham, *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 105. [6] Trevelyan, *Life of Macaulay.* i, 335. [7] Sir Walter Besant. [8] *S. Augustini Confessionum. Lib.* iii, 4 Loeb. i, 109–11.

made him to thirst after the immortality of wisdom with an incredible heat of spirit: *et immortalitatem sapientiae concupiscebam aestu cordis incredibili, et surgere coeperam, ut ad te redirem*, the Apostolic Scriptures being scarce known to him at that time.

Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* has moved some men as profoundly as the *Bible*, or any other scripture, and John Bunyan himself is stirred as profoundly by Martin Luther's *Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians*. The *God in whose hands are all our days and ways*, he says, *did cast into my hand, one day, a book of Martin Luther; it was his comment on the Galatians—it also was so old*, he records, *that it was ready to fall piece from piece if I did but turn it over*. He is much pleased that so old a book has fallen into his hands, and he has but a little way perused it, when he finds his own condition in Luther's experience, *so largely and profoundly handled, as if this book had been written*, he saith, *out of my heart;* and he desires to *let fall before all men* that he came to prefer this book of Martin Luther before all books (except the *Holy Bible*) that ever he had seen, as *most fit for a wounded conscience;* it healed his tortured spirit so that *he crouched no longer in terror with the burden on his back under that Hill which flashed fire on Christian, and he was enabled to walk in freedom by faith; it was the contagion of Luther's strength which was most serviceable to him*.[1] Mark Rutherford himself passed through a momentous spiritual experience after his first reading of the *Lyrical Ballads*. It was in his third year at college that he happened to find a copy *in paper boards* amongst a parcel of old books. He read one of the poems and then the rest. The book *conveyed* to him *no new doctrine*, yet he could only compare the change it wrought in him with that said to have been *wrought on Paul himself* by the Divine apparition on the road to Damascus.[2]

Many more such examples could be quoted from ancient works, but more than enough is too much, so to my modern instances. Take for one of them Tom Hood's confession[3] that a natural turn for reading and intellectual pursuits probably *preserved him from moral shipwreck* when young and deprived

[1] Mark Rutherford, *John Bunyan*. 118. [2] *Autobiography*. Coll. Ed. 18. [3] *Letter to the Manchester Athenæum*. 1843.

of *paternal pilotage; at the very least* his books keep him *aloof from the Ring, the Dog-pit, the Tavern, and the Saloon, with their degrading orgies; the reading animal,* he adds, *will not be content with the brutish wallowings that satisfy the unlearned pigs of the world;* and for another how Robert Louis Stevenson falls upon William Penn, his *Fruits of Solitude*, in a bookshop in San Francisco, at a time when he was *sick unto death;* he reads in it at all times and places and its peaceful and sweet companionship consoles and uplifts him;[1] it came *with what seemed a direct message from heaven;*[2] and for a third, the story of Lady Lugard, the journalist and traveller, told by W. T. Stead: she had been *reared in an atmosphere of almost Jacobite loyalty*, but one day she took with her into the branches of an apple-tree, at that time her favourite reading-place, a copy of Carlyle's *French Revolution*, and though she went *up the tree a Royalist and a Tory*, she came down *a passionate Democrat*,[3] a condition not desired by all, for Edward Dowden, at the other extreme, brags that he could always *cure* himself of *Radicalism by some sentence of Burke's.*[4] John Stuart Mill was *charmed out of juvenile despondency by Wordsworth*, and drawn *from hide-bound Benthamism by Coleridge;*[5] when William Morris first met with the chapter 'On the Nature of Gothic', in *The Stones of Venice*,[6] whilst he was still at Oxford, *it set fire to his enthusiasm, and kindled the beliefs of his whole life*,[7] and was thus the first cause of the Arts and Crafts Movement which affected the decorative taste of Europe and America; Bernard Shaw was made a Land Reformer by the *Progress and Poverty* of Henry George, and a Socialist by Karl Marx's *Das Kapital;*[8] Darwin read, in his early schooldays, a copy of the *Wonders of the World*, and this book gave him the wish to travel in remote lands, *which*, he says, *was ultimately fulfilled by the voyage of the 'Beagle';*[9] *Middlemarch* and *Adam Bede*, *The*

[1] *The Letters of Robert Louis Stevenson.* i, 199–200. [2] W. Penn, *Some Fruits of Solitude.* Preface. Gosse. x. [3] *The Times.* 28.i.1929. [4] *Fragments from Old Letters.* 193. [5] Cory, *Letters and Journals.* 356. [6] By John Ruskin. [7] Mackail, *William Morris.* ii, 275. [8] Holbrook Jackson, *Bernard Shaw.* 55. [9] *Life and Letters of Charles Darwin.* F. Darwin. i, 33.

Rise and Influence of Rationalism and *The History of Civilization*, were *momentous events* in the life of George Moore, and *Shelley* saves him from *intellectual savagery*.[1]

So I could go on until ink and paper give out. Past and present, it is all the same, books are necromancers, they exercise an influence more varied, more lasting, than any magic known to men. Histories, memoirs, biographies, are alight with their doings, *sic itur ad astra;*[2] yet I have gathered a fardel more from these authorities not solely to buttress my contention, although *a good report maketh the bones fat*,[3] but because such citations are both good news and proper to my theme; and as I have hitherto dilated at random, in more general terms, I will now particularly insist, and prove with more special and evident illustrations.

George Eliot gives out[4] that *Rousseau's genius* sends an *electric thrill* through her *intellectual and moral frame*, awakening *new perceptions*, and making *man and nature a world of freer thought and feeling;* not by his teaching, but by *the rushing, mighty wind of his inspiration*. It was Rousseau also who kindled the genius of Tolstoy, who read the whole of him at college, including his *Dictionary of Music;* he *was more than enthusiastic about him*, he *worshipped him*.[5] At the age of fifteen he wears a *medallion portrait* of him next his skin instead of the *Orthodox cross*, and many of Rousseau's pages are so kin to him that it seems he must have written them himself. Cowley reads Spenser's *Faerie Queene* before he is twelve years old, and is made a poet thereby *as irremediably as a child is made an Eunuch;*[6] *Shakespeare* does as much for Scott,[7] and Samuel Rogers's muse is first inspired by Beattie's *Minstrel* at the age of ten.[8] Southey gets his first glimpse of *the mighty movement of the stream of human affairs* from *Gibbon;*[9] from the day that Lafcadio Hearn reads the *First Principles* of Herbert Spencer *a totally new intellectual life* is *opened* for him, so that he hopes

[1] *Confessions of a Young Man*. 14, 4. [2] Virgil, *Aeneid*. ix, 641. 'This is the starward way.' [3] *Proverbs* xv, 30. [4] Qt. Lord Morley, *Recollections*. i, 98–99. [5] *Life*. Maude. i, 46. [6] 'Of Myself', *Essays*. [7] *Life*. Lockhart. i, 49. [8] Clayden, *Early Life of Samuel Rogers*. 58. [9] *Southey*. Dowden. 20.

during the next two years to devour the rest of that *oceanic philosophy*',[1] and Hazlitt's paper *On the Spirit of Obligations* is a *turning-point* in R. L. Stevenson's life.[2]

Dr. Johnson's mind was given its religious turn when, at Oxford, he took up Law's '*Serious Call to a Holy Life*', *expecting to find it a dull book* (*as such books generally are*), *and perhaps to laugh at it*, he confesses; and Boswell adds, *from this time forward religion was the predominant object of his thoughts.*[3] The same work, which has *a strange and moving spiritual pedigree*, had a similar powerful effect upon John Wesley and George Whitefield; and the *celebrated* Thomas Scott, of Aston Sandford, to whom Newman (so he confesses in his *Apologia*), *humanly speaking*, almost owed his *soul*, dates *the beginning of his spiritual life* from the hour when he carelessly took up Law's *Serious Call*, a book he had *hitherto treated with contempt.*[4] The study of the *Phaedo* of Plato, at the age of sixteen, *effected on* Frederick Myers *a kind of conversion*, and *Sappho* and *Pindar* created *epochs* in his life;[5] the reading of Dumont's *Traité de Législation* marks *an epoch* in the life of John Stuart Mill, *one of the turning-points of his mental history;*[6] and later, in a deep dejection, when he vainly sought relief from his favourite books, and *became persuaded* that his *love of mankind, and of excellence for its own sake, had worn itself out*, he was restored to happy interest in life by an accidental reading of *Marmontel's Mémoires;* he changed when he came to the passage which relates the death of the author's father: *the distressed position of the family, and the sudden inspiration by which he, then a mere boy, felt and made them feel that he would be everything to them;* from that moment his *burden grew lighter*, hope returned, and although he had relapses, he *never again was as miserable* as he had been.

The great Duke of Marlborough, as a schoolboy, *imbibed* his passion for the military life from *Vegetius;* Harriet Martineau fixes her *mental destiny* for seven years by reading

[1] *Life and Letters of Lafcadio Hearn.* Bisland. i, 374–5. [2] 'The Influence of Books', *Art of Writing.* 87. [3] *Life.* Boswell. Ed. Hill. i, 68–9. [4] Birrell, 'Edward Gibbon', *Coll. Essays.* i, 231–2. [5] *Fragments of Prose and Poetry.* 17–18. [6] *Autobiography.* 64, 134–5, 40–1.

Paradise Lost at the age of seven;[1] Dr. John Brown reads Wordsworth's *Excursion* when he is eighteen and is *a different man from that time;*[2] Frederick James Furnivall is made a life-long student of our early literature by Tennyson's *English Idylls;*[3] the *sense of romance* comes to Edmund Gosse after reading '*The Cameronian's Dream*', *by a certain James Hyslop, a schoolmaster on a man-of-war;*[4] Dr. Delany tells Samuel Richardson that his mind is raised above *this poor terrestrial citadel of men* by reading Young's *Night Thoughts;*[5] William Cobbett dates the birth of his intellect from the reading of Swift's *Tale of a Tub*, which he bought for threepence in place of his supper, at the age of eleven;[6] his modern likeness, John Burns, when a boy, bought a copy of More's *Utopia* for sixpence, then a large sum of money for him: *This book has made me what I am*, he told Edward Newton, *for me it is the greatest book in the world; the first book I ever bought, the corner-stone of my library, the foundation on which I have built my life.*[7] Samuel Butler met a man in New Zealand who imagined he was being *converted to Christianity* by reading Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, got by mistake for Butler's *Analogy*, which a friend had advised him to read;[8] much as an old dame, *a very devout Methodist*, having *moved from Colchester to a house in the neighbourhood of the City Road*, mistook *the Hall of Science for a chapel, and sat at the feet of Charles Bradlaugh for many years, entranced by his eloquence, without questioning his orthodoxy or moulting a feather of her faith.*[9] Many more instances might I give, but find more of them in that section which treats of books as they are medicinally disposed, for they have much value in that kind and there are several authentic cases in which they have served as alteratives by their mere presence. But here I am expounding their effect on healthy readers, and hope I

[1] *Autobiography.* i, 42. [2] *Letters of Dr. John Brown.* 286. [3] Monro. *F. J. Furnivall.* xliii. [4] *Father and Son.* (1909.) 61. [5] *Corr. of Richardson.* Barbauld. iv, 48. [6] Qt. *Book-Lovers' Anth.* 184. [7] *A Magnificent Farce.* 253. [8] *Note-Books of Samuel Butler.* 311. [9] Bernard Shaw, Epist. Dedicatory, *Man and Superman.* xxxiv.

have assembled sufficient evidence to incline you to go on with the argument.

III. THE POWER OF THE POET

A poet, *soaring in the high reason of his fancies, with his garland and singing-robes about him*,[1] is a force, moving mountains (what so stubborn, immobile, as a man, as the soul of man!), engines, powers, as some have well said, and I have cited in my preliminary discourse; upon the strength of those words and some other collateral assistances, I have run together, *con amore*, and to augment this tale of influences, a garland of opinions and experiences of the power of poetry, the sum of the following discourse being nothing but the sense of these words of Shelley: *Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration; the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present; the words which express what they understand not; the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire; the influence which is moved not, but moves.*[2] Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, their names are eras, epochs, histories, movements: *the birth of a poet is the principal event in chronology;*[3] they spell mankind and almost prove him, as so many claim on more slender evidence, cousin-german to the Gods themselves, nay, *nearness to* Sappho *made a man the equal of the gods*,[4] for poetry *is not the result of reason nor of intellect. It is the flower of magic, not logic.*[5] Well may Rogers proclaim[6] that poetry is *the language of the Gods*, for as the poets have made manifest the Gods to us, given them *a local habitation and a name*, so have they aggrandised all power soever, for good or ill; they buttress, uphold, exalt; there is *some awe mixed with the joy of our surprise*, Emerson asserts,[7] when a poet who lived hundreds of years ago says that which lies closest to our own soul which we also *had well-nigh thought and said*. They are

[1] Milton, *Reason of Church Government*. Intro. ii. [2] 'A Defence of Poetry', *Prose Works*. ii, 38. [3] Emerson, 'The Poet', *Essays*. 314. [4] F. W. H. Myers, *Fragments of Prose and Poetry*. 19. [5] Edith Sitwell, *Tradition and Experiment in Present-day Literature*. 97. [6] *Italy*. [7] *The American Scholar*.

Truth and Beauty, *all we know on earth, and all we need to know;*[1]

> And beauty making beautiful old rhyme
> In praise of ladies dead and lovely knights.[2]

They are notable teachers: the *general end* of Poetry, Dryden maintains, is to *instruct delightfully;* in *Limbo*, Dante saluted Homer, Horace, Ovid and Lucan, as *the eternal educators of mankind;*[3] Petrarch, *in an age rude and uncultivated, by his tuneful homage to his Laura, refined the manners of the lettered world, and filled Europe with love;*[4] *our sage and serious Poet Spenser*, Milton pronounced *a better teacher than Scotus or Aquinas;*[5] there is magic in their words, *like the language of the Gods*,

> Such as, of old, wise Bards employ'd, to make
> Unpolished men their wild retreats forsake:
> Law-giving Heroes, fam'd for taming brutes,
> And raising cities with their charming lutes.
> For rudest minds with harmony were caught,
> And civil life was by the Muses taught.[6]

For *truly*, as Montaigne advises, *Philosophy is nothing else but a sophisticated poesie: whence have these ancient Authors all their authorities, but from Poets? And the first were Poets themselves, and in their Art treated the same. Plato is but a loose Poet. All high and more than humane sciences are decked and enrolled with a Poetical stile.*[7] They are greater than scientists: *of all scientists is our poet the Monarch;*[8] *five hundred Sir Isaac Newtons go to the making up of a Shakespeare or a Milton;*[9] and there is no wonder, for the poet doth not only show the way, *but giveth so sweet a prospect into the way, as will entice any man to enter it; nay, he doth, as if your journey should lie through a fair vineyard, at the first give you a cluster of grapes, that, full of that taste, you may long to pass further;* and in his passion for the *winning of the mind from wickedness to virtue*, he will savour his admonishments

[1] Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn.* [2] Shakespeare, *Sonnets*, cvi. [3] *Inferno.* iv, 88–90. [4] Qt. Tatham. *Francesco Petrarca.* ii, 21. [5] Milton, *Areopagitica.* Ed. Holt White. 65–6. [6] Edmund Waller, 'Upon the Earl of Roscommon's Translation of Horace, De Arte Poetica', etc. [7] 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii, 301. [8] Sir Philip Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie.* [9] S. T. Coleridge. *Letters.* i, 352.

with sweetness; *even as the child is often brought to take wholesome things by hiding them in such other as have a pleasant taste;* he comes with a tale *which holdeth children from play, and old men from the chimney corner;* so is it that men, he concludes,[1] will be glad to hear the tales of *Hercules, Achilles, Cyrus,* and *Aeneas;* and, *hearing them, must needs hear the right description of wisdom, valour, and justice; which, if they had been barely, that is to say philosophically, set out, they would swear they be brought to school again.* They are an improvement upon Nature herself, if we are to believe him, where he asserts that *nature never set forth the earth in so rich tapestry as divers poets have done, neither with pleasant rivers, fruitful trees, sweet-smelling flowers, nor whatsoever else may make the too much loved earth more lovely. Her world is brazen, the poets only deliver a golden;* yet it is not the nature of poetry to be merely a part, *nor yet a copy, of the real world* (*as we commonly understand that phrase*), *but to be a world by itself, independent, complete, autonomous.* They reproduce the mystery and wonder of life and death. *Have I not seene this divine saying in Plato,* saith Montaigne, that Nature is *nothing but an ænigmatical poesie?*[2] *Through the dim purple air* of *Dante fly those who have stained the world with the beauty of their sin.*[3] Well may Gibbon exhort[4] the Spensers whose nobility had been *illustrated and enriched by the trophies of Marlborough* to *consider the 'Faerie Queene' as the most precious jewel of their coronet.*

Poets are *the unacknowledged legislators of the world,* proclaims Shelley,[5] which is well known and many instances are recorded: *If a man were permitted to make all the ballads, he need not care who should make the laws of a nation,*[6] saith one, knowing the power of song; and in this spirit Lycurgus, the Lawgiver of Lacedaemon, *sent the Poet Thales from Crete to prepare and mollifie the Spartan surlinesse with his smooth songs and odes, the better to plant among them law and civility;* for

[1] Sir Philip Sidney, *Apologie for Poetrie.* [2] 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. ii, 301. [3] Oscar Wilde, *The Critic as Artist.* [4] *Memoirs.* Ed. Hill. 41. [5] 'Defence of Poetry', *Prose Works.* ii, 38. [6] Andrew Fletcher of Saltoun, 'Letter to the Marquis of Montrose'.

they were *muselesse and unbookish*, he saith,[1] *minding nought but warre*. Well may Wordsworth hail them as *Powers:*

> For ever to be hallowed; only less,
> For what we are and what we may become,
> Than Nature's self, which is the breath of God,
> Or His pure Word by miracle revealed,[2]

for, as a modern poet complains,[3] *he would be a liar full of impudence who should dare to say that he felt wholly at ease with the awful Milton or Dante, with the dread death-march over death of dread Lucretius;* our reverence to these great ones being a *religion*; genius, like *love and beauty*, a *pledge of divinity and the everlasting*, and *a light perfected lyric lures us heavenward.*

No poet, says Frederick Myers,[4] *has lain so close to so many hearts* as (so Bacon called him) *the chastest poet and royalest, Virgilius Maro, that to the memory of man is known. No words so often as his have sprung to men's lips in moments of excitement and self-revelation, from the one fiery line retained and chanted by the untameable boy* (Claudius Albinus) *who was to be Emperor of Rome,*

> Arma amens capio; nec sat rationis in armis[5]

to the impassioned prophecy of the great English statesman (Pitt) *as he pleaded till morning's light for the freedom of a continent of slaves,*

> Nosque ubi primus equis Oriens adflavit anhelis,
> Illis sera rubens accendit lumina Vesper.[6]

And he cites[7] the *varied memories* which are stirred as we read *one line after another*, from Virgil's own lifetime down to the political debates of to-day. *On this line,*

> Hoc solum nomen quoniam de conjuge restat,[8]

the poet's own voice faltered as he read. At this,

> Tu Marcellus eris, etc.[9]

[1] *Areopagitica*. Ed. Holt White, 25–6. [2] *Prelude*. v, 218–22. [3] Lionel Johnson, *Post Liminium*. 217. [4] Myers, 'Virgil', *Classical Essays*. 117–18.
[5] 'Arms I seize, distraught; reason hath little place 'mid arms.' *Aen*. ii, 314.
[6] 'What time the sun at dawn breathes upon us with panting steeds, for them the ruddy glow of eve illumes the sky.' *Geo*. i, 250.
[7] *Op. cit*. 116–17.
[8] 'Since this much alone is left from the name of husband.' *Aen*. iv, 324.
[9] 'Thou shalt be Marcellus', etc. *Aen*. vi, 883.

Augustus and Octavia melted into passionate weeping. Here the verse,

Infelix simulacrum atque ipsius umbra Creusae,[1]

which Augustine quotes as typical in its majestic rhythm of all the pathos and the glory of pagan art, from which the Christian was bound to flee; then the couplet,

Aude, hospes, contemnere opes, et te quoque dignum
Finge deo, rebusque veni non asper egenis,[2]

which Fénelon could never read without admiring tears; now the line,

Exoriare aliquis nostris ex ossibus ultor.[3]

Filippo Strozzi scrawled on his prison-wall, when he slew himself to avoid worse ill; then the words,

Heu! fuge crudelis terras, fuge litus avarum,[4]

which, *like a trumpet-call, roused Savonarola to seek the things that are above.* This line

Manibus date lilia plenis[5]

Dante heard on the lips of the Church Triumphant, at the opening of the Paradise of God, and last, though not exhausting the material for such a citation, he recalls *the long roll of prophecies sought tremblingly in the monk's secret cell, or echoing in the ears of emperors* (Claudius, Hadrian, Severus, etc.) *from Apollo's shrine, which have answered the appeal made by so many an eager heart to the Virgilian lots*—that *strange invocation* which *has been addressed,* he believes, to *Homer, Virgil,* and the *Bible* alone; *the offspring of men's passionate desire to bring to bear on their own lives the wisdom and the beauty which they revered in the past, to make their prophets, in such wise as they might,*

Speak from those lips of immemorial speech,
If but one word for each.[6]

[1] 'The unhappy image and shade of Creusa herself.' *Aen.* ii, 771.
[2] 'Dare, stranger, to despise wealth and make thyself also worthy of the god, nor look roughly on our humble state.' *Aen.* viii, 364.
[3] 'May some avenger arise from my bones.' *Aen.* iv, 625.
[4] 'Ah, flee the cruel land, the greedy shore.' *Aen.* iii, 44.
[5] 'Fill my hands with lilies.' *Aen.* vi, 884.
[6] Qt. Myers. 'Virgil', *Classical Essays.* 117.

A like testimony Sir Theodore Martin gives of friendly *Horace*,[1] who has been *a manual with men the most diverse in their natures, culture, and pursuits.* Dante ranks him next after Homer; Montaigne knows him by heart; Fénelon and Bossuet never weary of quoting him; La Fontaine polishes his own exquisite style upon his model; Voltaire calls him *the best of preachers;* Hooker escapes with him to the fields to seek oblivion of a hard life, made harder by a shrewish spouse; Lord Chesterfield confessed that *when he talked best he quoted Horace;* to Boileau and Wordsworth he is equally dear; Condorcet dies in his dungeon with *Horace* by his side; when Gibbon served in the militia, *on every march,* he says, *in every journey, Horace was always in my pocket, and often in my hand;* and, Martin concludes, *as it has been, so it is. In many a pocket, where this might be least expected, lies a well-thumbed Horace; and in many a devout Christian heart the maxims of the gentle, genial pagan find a place near the higher teachings of a greater master.*

Homer hath consoled others in many ages; and Dante places him first among bards:

> Di quel signor de l' altissimo canto
> Che sovra li altri com' aquila vola;[2]
>
> Of him the monarch of sublimest song,
> That o'er the others like an eagle soars;[3]

Pope advised, believing as he did that *Nature and Homer were the same,*[4]

> Be Homer's works your study and delight,
> Read them by day, and meditate by night.[5]

Carteret[6] on his deathbed repeated with *sonorous emphasis* those six inspiring lines from the twelfth book of the *Iliad* (322–28), for he *worshipped and cherished Homer: 'Ah, friend,'* he said, in the words of Sarpedon,[7] '*if once escaped from this battle we were ever to be ageless and immortal, neither would I fight myself in the foremost ranks, nor would I send thee into the war that giveth men*

[1] *Horace.* Martin. viii. [2] *Inferno.* iv, 95–6. [3] Cary's translation. [4] Pope, *Essay on Criticism.* 135. [5] *Ib.* 124–5. [6] Qt. Rosebery. Appreciations and Addresses. 161. [7] Translation. Andrew Lang.

renown; but now—for assuredly ten thousand fates of death do every way beset us, and these no mortal may escape nor avoid—now let us go forward.'

The histories and memoirs are full of such accounts, praises and explanations, as all know, and I make this brief garland neither to augment nor to settle or conclude them, but because it would have been less appropriate not to do so, poetry being so high a peak in the range of bookish achievements. More may be added, if any man hath a mind to it, so to sum up all I shall conclude with these words which Montaigne writ of Poetry. *Whosoever discerneth her beautie with a constant, quicke-seeing, and settled looke, he can no more see and comprehend the same than the splendor of a lightning flash. It hath no communitie with our judgement; but ransaketh and ravisheth the same. The furie which prickes and moves him that can penetrate her, doth also stricke and wound a third man, if he heare it either handled or recited, as the Adamant stone drawes, not only a needle, but infuseth some of her beautie in the same, to draw others.*[1]

IV. LIFE IMITATES LETTERS

William Cory[2] asks what *apostolical succession* more interesting than *the tradition of thought and sentiment?* He sees whole generations of men, mighty movements and destinies, determined and moulded by books: *the gentlemanly behaviour* of our squires in the Civil War, brought about by the *translation of Tasso by Squire Fairfax;* the *interpretation given by Henry Wotton to woman-worship, in his poem to Elizabeth of Bohemia, telling on Eton lads such as Robert Boyle;* John Evelyn in his *Diary* showing how his character was formed by books; Sunderland (husband of Saccharissa), Lovelace, and Wogan, all *warmed by Philip Sidney;* the *charm and spell* of Vandyke's portraits *being both effect of Spenser-Sidney-Raleigh literature, and cause of Cavalier and Roundhead nobleness;* he traces the

[1] 'Of Cato the Younger', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. i, 251. [2] *Letters and Journals.* 416–17.

fact that our men were more chivalrous in the three wars with France between George I and the Revolution, than their forefathers of the Crécy-Agincourt days, and the behaviour of Frenchmen towards Britons, and *vice versa*, more courteous *to literature, not to religion. Lord Chatham* (*apud Green*) *comes out as a sort of Joshua. Was he not moved by Books?* Rachel Russell, a *sort of she-apostle to the governing families;* Lucy Hutchinson and Margaret Newcastle *helped towards lady-worship*, and the fruit of this growth in Fanny Burney's life. Every character described by literature, in fact, *the germ of characters and fragments of characters*, the stuff of creation, protoplasm, making or marring men, women, lives, eras, even nature itself is modified by books; Darwin makes us see the evolutionary processes which he saw, and if Mary Coleridge is a reliable guide, *Wordsworthian animals abound* in our Lake District, the *cows and sheep* looking *as if they knew the 'Ode to Immortality' by heart.*[1]

Oscar Wilde would have that *Literature always anticipates life. It does not copy it, but moulds it to its purpose.*[2] Hamlet invents modern thought: *The world has become sad because a puppet was once melancholy.* He cites stories of boys who *pillage the stalls of unfortunate applewomen, break into sweet-shops at night, and alarm old gentlemen who are returning home from the city by leaping out on them in suburban lanes, with black masks and unloaded revolvers,* after reading the adventures of *Jack Sheppard* and *Dick Turpin;* which many of our magistrates have supported when passing judgement on naughty boys made criminal by *Penny Dreadfuls.*

The mature are in like manner affected, if we are to believe Sir Henry Wotton, who will have that Felton became an assassin through the incentive of Eglesham's book against the Duke of Buckingham.[3] Wilde tells also of a governess who, soon after the appearance of *Vanity Fair*, becomes a veritable Becky Sharp, running away with the nephew of her employer and *making a great splash in society* in the manner of Mrs. Rawdon Crawley; of *a noble gentleman* who a few months

[1] *Gathered Leaves.* 250. [2] *Intentions.* 'The Decay of Lying.' [3] Walpole, *Letters.* Cunningham. iv. 201. Note.

after *The Newcomes* has reached *a fourth edition* dies with '*Adsum*' *on his lips;* of a certain Mr. Hyde, who, *shortly after Mr. Stevenson published his curious psychological story of transformation*, tramples upon a child by accident and takes refuge from the angry mob in a surgery, the door of which happens to be open. These strange incidents are accidental, unconscious, to those who act in them, but books rule their destiny, they know not why or how. It is another instance of Nature imitating Art, for, as he argues, *Life is Art's best, Art's only pupil.* He further holds that the Nihilist was *invented* by Tourguénieff and *completed* by Dostoieffsky, that the nineteenth century, *as we know it*, was *largely an invention* of Balzac, our Luciens de Rubempré, our Rastignacs, and De Marsays making their *first appearance on the stage of the 'Comédie Humaine'; young men*, he adds, *have committed suicide because Rolla did so, have died by their own hand because by his own hand Werther died. Think*, he asks, *what we owe to the imitation of Christ, of what we owe to the imitation of Caesar.*

Thus do books have their way with men, making them or unmaking them, as when that *first glowing impression* of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius gives Marius a new revelation of life and never loses its power over him,[1] or when Dorian Gray opens the *yellow book*[2] Lord Henry Wotton had sent him and finds it *the strangest book he had ever read*, for it makes him feel that *in exquisite raiment, and to the delicate sound of flutes, the sins of the world were passing in dumb show before him.* He cannot free himself from its influence, it takes control of his life. It seems to him *to contain the story of his own life . . . before he had lived it;*[3] beneath its sway he becomes *more and more enamoured of his own beauty, more and more interested in the corruption of his own soul.*[4] In this strange book he reads Huysmans' careful record of that curious degenerate, Floressas des Esseintes, how he intoxicates himself with exotic books, Latins of the decadence, morbid romantics and over-sensitive moderns, *symbolists, Parnassians*, as Edgar Allan Poe, Charles Baudelaire, and Barbey d'Aurévilly; Stéphane Mallarmé,

[1] Walter Pater, *Marius the Epicurean.* i, 69. [2] The *A Rebours* of J-K. Huysmans. [3] Oscar Wilde, *Dorian Gray.* 175–7. [4] *Ib.* 179.

Arthur Rimbaud and Paul Verlaine; thus exhibiting the spiritual disturbance which afflicts so many in these times, and which forces him ever to be seeking some new and strange sensation, which he finds ultimately to his taste in Barbey d'Aurévilly: *those gamey flavours, those stains of disease and decay, that cankered surface, that taste of rotten-ripeness which he so loved to savour among the decadent writers, Latin and Monastic, of the early ages.*[1] He also finds in the *contorted epithets and beauties* of Verlaine a like *over-ripe flavour;*[2] the *Plaintes d'Automne et Frisson d'Hiver* of Mallarmé have a diction so *magnificently ordered* that it *lulled the senses, like some mournful incantation, some intoxicating melody, with thoughts of an irresistible seductiveness, stirring the soul of the sensitive reader whose quivering nerves vibrate with an acuteness that rises to ravishment, to pain itself.* It is books thus conceived that please him, books which appeal only to an *ideal reader*, by a *mental collaboration of consent* between *half a score of persons of superior intellect scattered up and down the world, a delectable feast of epicures*, appreciable by them only. Only the decadence of a literature moves him, as being *attacked by incurable organic disease, enfeebled by the decay of ideas, exhausted by the excess of grammatical subtlety, sensitive only to the whims of curiosity that torment a fever patient, and yet eager in its expiring hours to express every thought and fancy, frantic to make good all the omissions of the past, tortured on its deathbed by the craving to leave a record of the most subtle pangs of suffering*, which was incarnate in Mallarmé in *the most consummate expression.*[3]

These distinct effects are as much due to the reader as to the writer, for, as I have erewhile hinted, reading is a partnership, and, as Vernon Lee holds, *the writer's intention is limited by the tempers and experience of the reader.*[4] Sometimes, and there is good evidence in support of the claim, the reader is more stout-hearted than the writer, going farther than he would go, believing more than he believed, taking more risks than he would have taken. I find a good instance in Lanson's account of Rousseau, whom he advertises as *a poor dreamy*

[1] *A Rebours.* xii, 220. [2] *Ib.* xiv, 254. [3] *Ib.* xiv, 268–70. [4] *Handling of Words.* 80.

creature approaching action *only with alarm and with every manner of precaution*, and *who understands the applications of his boldest doctrines in a way to reassure conservatives and satisfy opportunists*. Thus, in the end, *the work detaches itself from the author, lives its independent life, and, heavily charged with revolutionary explosives which neutralize the moderate and conciliatory elements Rousseau has put into it for his own satisfaction, it exasperates and inspires revolt and fires enthusiasms and irritates hatreds; it is the mother of violence, the source of all that is uncompromising, it launches the simple souls who give themselves up to its strange virtue upon the desperate quest of the absolute, an absolute to be realised now by anarchy and now by social despotism.*[1] Thus does the disciple outrace the master and overshoot his target; but the reader goes further even than that: he may not only exaggerate or otherwise distort the writer's idea, but he may, and does involuntarily, alter it to meet his own idea of that idea; even putting in things that are not there: *He who had thought he had understood something in my work*, Nietzsche complains, *had as a rule adjusted something in it to his own image—not infrequently the very opposite of myself.*[2] And finally, all the other influences of time and place, mood, health, weather, and so forth, contribute to the process of distortion, that *halo of vague something else*, which in addition to *the succession of images determined by the words of the writer*, induces in the reader *a simultaneous continuum in which it all takes place;* and *the reader's own experience, moving beneath the pressure of the word, brings into consciousness how many sights, how many feelings of which the author of that word can have no notion.*[3] In the end it often happens that the Darwinians are more Darwinian than Darwin, or so deflected from the path of the master's idea that they fill him with fear and even abhorrence, and are often repudiated by him; and yet in these deflexions the power of books is both checked and established, for the way to the inmost sanctuary of a book is through the spirit of the reader. The best disciple goes beyond the master.

[1] *Annales de la Société Jean-Jacques Rousseau.* viii, 30–1. Qt. Irving Babbitt. *Rousseau and Romanticism.* Intro. xvii–xviii. [2] *Ecce Homo.* Trans. Ludovici. 57. [3] Vernon Lee, *Handling of Words.* 79–80.

Now I bid you lose me and find yourselves; and only when ye have all denied me will I come back unto you.[1]

V. MEN WHO BECOME BOOKS: BIBLIANTHROPUS DEFINED

If, as I have shown, *pro captu lectoris habent sua fata libelli*,[2] books, as I have also shown, make the fate of their readers; it is a *quid pro quo*, give and take. A true bookman, I have sufficiently argued, is congenitally disposed towards books (*all books as books interest me*),[3] and they to him; he attracts books as the magnet steel. Books, says Harold Child,[4] and I can support him out of mine own experience, *began to collect round me, to stick to me, to heap* themselves upon me. There is only a difference in degree between the big and the little collector, between the hoarder and the reader. If costly libraries grew about Heber in several of the capitals of Europe, smaller and less valuable collections marked the numerous migrations of Shelley. But no matter how buried or besieged, they know how to find the book they need: even the confusion of Magliabecchi's library at Florence *did not hinder him finding any book he wanted*,[5] and Thomas Watts, the first superintendent of the British Museum Reading Room, never forgot *a single book that passed through his hands* and *always remembered its exact place*.[6]

Everyone acquainted with bookmen can bring supporting evidence, without delving into past times or other lands, and I am obliged to Professor Prothero for discovering to me the clairvoyance of Henry Bradshaw in all such matters. In almost every page of his *Memoir* he shows that not only had the Cambridge librarian an infallible instinct for the contents and the character of a book, but that he could find any book he required either in his own library or elsewhere, at home or

[1] Nietzsche, *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. Common. xxii. 3. [2] Terentius Maurus. 'The reader's fancy makes the fate of books.' [3] *Francis Jenkinson*. Stewart. 38. [4] 'Ego et libri mei', *Bibliophile's Almanack*. (1927.) 15. [5] D'Israeli, *Cur. of Lit.* ii, 177. [6] G. F. Barwick, *Reading Room of the British Museum*. 111.

abroad, with the exact instinct for locality of a homing pigeon or migratory bird. His *insight* was so *exceptional*, says Blades,[1] that his *predictions seem to bring their own fulfilment;* like the owl with its prey he could find books in the dark;[2] like *the loadstone-fingered hero of the fairy tale*[3] he could draw out the 'lost' fragments of ancient manuscripts from their hiding-places in the covers of other volumes or in neglected corners of old libraries or the muniment rooms of churches. He astonished librarians by discovering for them books in their own collections which they were convinced were not there, as when in 1864 he visited Bruges to examine a particular book in the library. The librarian *declared that the book had been removed by the French at the beginning of the century.* Bradshaw was not convinced, he persisted that the book had not been moved and at last *blurted out the letter, shelf, and number under which the book would be found—and there it was;* he had no note, *the class-mark was in his memory, along with all other particulars about the book.*[4] For more stories to this end read him. I have said enough to enable me now to suggest that bookmen belong to a special class of *homo sapiens*, since they are not primarily reasoners but possessors of instincts provoked and developed by a passionate attachment. This bookman, *biblianthropus*, is bookish by predisposition and bookish by habit, the one adding to the other until, by cumulative effect, a distinct type of man is produced.

The persistent memorizing of the results of intensive book-culture would be sufficient in itself to bring about this differentiation, for if instinct, as some maintain, be inherited memory, repetition of memorable experiences in a single life-time, especially if they are pleasurable, produces the same effects in that life as it would produce in a succession of lives, if repeated over many generations, for in this reference *life is memory; the life of a creature is the memory of a creature*, and our variations but the materialized remembrance of experiences: *if*, saith mine author,[5] *we did not remember different things we should be absolutely like each other.* Bookmen are like each other in

[1] Qt. *Memoir of Henry Bradshaw.* 255. [2] *Ib.* 269. [3] *Ib.* 138. [4] *Ib.* 113.
[5] Samuel Butler, *Life and Habit.* 300.

ratio to their unlikeness to other men. So great the influence of bookish experiences that constant and resolute bookmen may, some of them, take upon themselves the character and in some degree the appearance of books, as *things take the signature of thought.*[1] Some authorities go so far as to say that they become books, or, as those old-fashioned librarians recorded by Gerald Stanley Lee,[2] so *identified* with their books, so *wrought in* with them that they could not be *unmixed;* a conclusion confirmed by Eugene Field, who observed that old booksellers from long and close association *come to resemble their wares* not only in their looks but in their talk.[3]

I could enlarge upon this theme by bringing evidence in support from the general behaviour of civilized peoples who are all more or less, as I have hinted before, book-fed, or in the wider sense, newspaper-fed, reflections of the printed word, the modern world being, not always admirably, something of a bibliocracy, whose classes are Peripatetics, Platonists, Nietzscheans, Shavians, Darwinians, Wesleyans, Muggletonians, Freudians, Swedenborgians, Bergsonians, Mendelians, Johnsonians, etc., set severally in a democratic archipelago suffused by the propaganda of the periodical press. This, however, is beyond the frontiers of my theme, which is *biblianthropus* in his more concentrate form.

It may be reasonably argued that other processes of nature operate in bringing about these phenomena, as transfiguration or metempsychosis, the translation of one into the other, book into man, man into book, but this is not clear. At the same time, some are of opinion that it is so, as Jacob, who argues[4] that if the transmigration of souls is not a chimera, *inventée pour la consolation des âmes tendres* (invented for the consolation of pious souls), the soul of an old *bouquiniste* of his acquaintance would certainly pass after death into one of his books, if only to give life to *le ver rongeur,* the gnawing worm which digs its own grave *dans les feuilles solitaires d'un saint-Thomas ou d'un Cujas* (in the solitary pages of a Saint Thomas or a Cujas). That the souls of men pass into their books

[1] Coleridge, *Aids to Reflection.* xxix. [2] *Lost Art of Reading.* 73. [3] *Love-Affairs of a Bibliomaniac.* 122. [4] *Ma République.* 20.

during life is more generally admitted: Le Long's *whole soul was in his library;*[1] show me a man's books and you show me the man himself, etc.

Yet if we have no clear testimony of metempsychosis, the case for change, both of body and mind, as a result of contact with books, is perceptibly ruled by that same law of *metamorphosis* which *holds throughout* all the divisions of our world, astronomic, geologic, biologic, psychologic, sociologic, and the rest. *We know that while a physically-cohering aggregate like the human body is getting larger and taking on its general shape, each of its organs is doing the same; that while each organ is growing and becoming unlike others, there is going on a differentiation and integration of its component tissues and vessels; and that even the components of these components are severally increasing and passing into more definitely heterogeneous structures.*[2] Such changes are observable within the limits of a single life by reason of what we do, see, think, eat, etc., and by its effect on the things which surround us and the people we meet. It may therefore be fairly reasoned that a particular change of personality may proceed from tender and continuous association with such potent companions as books, for, as Erasmus held,[3] *he that's violently in Love lives not in his own body, but in the thing he loves.*

If either of these theories be rejected as insufficient in itself, it may be supported by that process of transmutation by digestion which has various well-known manifestations in the colouring and size of man and animals and the customs of primitive peoples; nor is it unreasonable to suppose that as the inhabitants of the South Sea Islands and the wilds of Africa are able by projection of ideas to give a mysterious vitality to inanimate objects, so a biblio-animism may be at work making books men, men books; and if, on the other hand, as Milton believed,[4] the writer of a poem must himself *be a true poem*, or, as Victor Hugo held, the book is its writer,[5]

[1] Dibdin, *Bibliomania*. (1811.) 63. [2] Herbert Spencer, *First Principles*. Popular Ed. 438–9. [3] *Praise of Folly*. Trans. Wilson. (Oxford Ed. 1913.) 184. [4] *Apology for Smectymnuus. Prose Works*. (1697.) 335. [5] Qt. Richardson, *Choice of Books*. 107.

I perceive no reason to suppose that a bookman may not himself become a book, seeing that we become what we absorb, *for*, Samuel Butler says,[1] *matter which has once been assimilated by any identity or personality, becomes for all practical purposes part of the assimilating personality*. Thus, as another authority affirms, *each reader, while receiving from the writer, is in reality reabsorbing into his life, where it refreshes or poisons him, a residue of his own living; but melted into absorbable suppleness, combined and stirred into a new kind of efficacy by the choice of the writer*.[2] Which, if I follow mine author aright, is a particular interpretation of an idea *widely distributed* among primitive peoples, who, Lubbock gives out,[3] believe that *a person imbibes the characteristics of an animal which he eats*, and he brings in support many curious instances. Here are a few for a taste, which I have taken from his work and other sources: the Mahouts in India give their elephants tiger's liver to make them courageous, and the eyes of a brown horned owl to make them see well at night;[4] the Malays of Singapore go further, for they are convinced that the man who eats tiger *acquires the sagacity as well as the courage of that animal;*[5] so also the natives of the Ivory Coast of Africa drink elephant's blood, which is supposed to endow them with the strength and courage required in hunting those animals;[6] on the other hand the Dyaks of Borneo allow their women and children to eat venison, but to the men it is forbidden lest they become as *faint-hearted* as deer.[7] In ancient times it was believed that women became fertile by eating frogs *because that animal lays so many eggs;*[8] the Caribs eat neither pig nor tortoise lest their eyes become as small as theirs;[9] the Dacotahs eat dog to induce canine sagacity and courage;[10] the Arabs attribute the passionate and revengeful character of their race to the eating of camel

[1] *Life and Habit*. 140. [2] Vernon Lee, *Handling of Words*. 79. [3] *Origin of Civilization*. 19. [4] Forsyth, *Highlands of Central India*. 452. [5] Keppel, *Visit to the Indian Archipelago*. 13. [6] M. L. Morel. Qt. Allier, *Mind of the Savage*. 278. [7] Keppel, *Exped. to Borneo*. i, 231. [8] Inman, *Ancient Faiths in Ancient Names*. 383. [9] Müller. *Geschichte der americanischen Urreligionen*. 221. [10] Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*. ii, 80.

flesh;[1] Siberians eat bear's flesh because it gives a zest for the chase and makes them fearless;[2] and the Kaffirs have a universal faith in all such meats, for they make a powder of the dried flesh of various wild beasts which they administer with the object of imparting to the men *the qualities of several animals*.[3]

Human flesh has its *gourmets* in several ages and places, and some of these anthropophagi take it as an alterative or augmentative, as those Maoris who eat their most formidable enemies to become strong and indefatigable,[4] and that Chinese servant of an English merchant at the time of the Taiping rebellion who ate the heart of a rebel in order to become brave.[5] In times past this belief still persisted even in Europe, and in a recent instance of cannibalism among Gipsies in Czecho-Slovakia, one of them gave out that it was preferable to serve *the brain to children, so that they might become more intelligent*, and another disclosed that *woman's flesh was preferred by young men, who considered that it had a more delicate flavour and imagined that they thereby acquired enhanced powers of seduction*.[6] But apart from such effects, human flesh-eaters believe that this practice gives continuity to their kind, as it is plainly set forth in the words of a prisoner cannibal among cannibals, cited by Montaigne. *I have a song made by a prisoner*, he saith, *wherein is this clause, Let them boldly come altogether, and flocke in multitudes, to feed on him; for with him they shall feed upon their fathers, and grandfathers, that heretofore have served his body for food and nourishment: These muscles* (saith he), *this flesh, and these veines, are your owne; fond men as you are, you know not that the substance of your forefathers limbes is yet tied unto ours? Taste them well, for in them shall you finde the relish of your own flesh*.[7] Some people, saith mine author again, anciently kept the custom even of devouring their own fathers, holding this action, not only *for a testimonie of pietie*

[1] Astley, *Coll. of Voyages*. ii, 143. [2] Atkinson, *Upper and Lower Amoor*. 462. [3] Callaway, *Religious System of the Amazulu*. iv, 438. [4] Lubbock, *Origin of Civilization*. 20. [5] Tylor, *Early Hist. of Man*. 131. [6] *Le Temps*. 11.iii.1927. Qt. Allier, *Mind of the Savage*. 203. [7] 'Of the Caniballes', *Essays*. Ed. Seccombe. i, 268.

and good affection, but *in some sort reviving and regenerating them by the transmutation made in their quick flesh, by digestion and nourishment.*[1]

Nor is this belief in transformation confined to flesh-eating. New Zealanders encourage their children to swallow pebbles to make them hard and incapable of pity.[2] *Many remedies were selected on this principle,* says Lubbock, *until recent times; it is,* he continues, *from the same kind of idea that 'eyebright', because the flowers somewhat resemble an eye, was supposed to be good for ocular complaints.*[3]

Absorption is not the only process of transubstantiation; change by contact with environment is so well established, not only in character and function but in form, feature and expression, that I need not dilate upon it (read more in Lamarck, Darwin, Huxley, Spencer, Butler, etc.). *Every portion of our bodies,* says Sir W. Arbuthnot Lane (Chirurgeon to *Ye Sette of Odd Volumes*), *alters very definitely with any mechanical variation in our surroundings,* by concentration upon one pose which is *telescoped into a portion of the life-time of the individual,*[4] and he illustrates this remark from the effects of certain poses of brewers' draymen, coal porters and shoemakers; from which I may infer by the same process that constant association with books, reading, turning over pages, holding, moving them from one place to another, as a daily habit over many years, may dispose the form and features of the bookman to a definite complexion or character, an approximation to a book or a library, blending in the end naturally with them; which is supported by William Godwin, who confesses that he himself is *a sort of intellectual chameleon, assuming the colour of the substances on which I rest.*[5] It is thus something more than whimsy that made Father Angelo Finardi discover in the letters of Magliabecchi's name when Latinised —*Antonius Magliabechius*—the nearly perfect anagram—*Is unus bibliotheca magna—he is in himself a great library;*[6] and also made J. J. Jusserand see in Dr. F. J. Furnivall a *living*

[1] 'Apologie of Raymond Sebond.' *Ib.* ii, 369. [2] Yates, *New Zealand.* 82. [3] *Op. cit.* 20. [4] *The Influence which our Surroundings exert upon Us.* 10–11. [5] *The Inquirer.* [6] Anderson, *Fragrance among Old Volumes.* 4.

and talking library more *delightful and cheerful* than the British Museum.[1]

Leigh Hunt[2] finds it pleasant to reflect that all those great lovers of books in times past have themselves become books. *What better metamorphosis*, he asks, *could Pythagoras have desired? How Ovid and Horace exulted in anticipation of theirs!* To the shape of a book *so small yet so comprehensive, so slight yet so lasting, so insignificant yet so venerable*, turns *the mighty activity of Homer; the placid sage of Academus; the grandeur of Milton; the exuberance of Spenser, the pungent elegance of Pope, and the volatility of Prior;* and if life is memory, and human life conscious memory, a book, more than any other work of man, is an epitome of remembrance:

> When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
> I summon up remembrance of things past.[3]

A book thus considered becomes the one who wrote it, a living entity, as Milton knew, and therefore capable, as all living things, of reproducing itself. Samuel Butler went so far as to argue that the production of a book was involuntary, for just as the generation of a body is not the result of a parental desire for reproduction, but *the discontent of the germs with their surroundings inside those parents, and a desire on their part to have a separate maintenance*,[4] so literary creation is the desire of the book-germ within the author for a separate existence. Of his own books, he says: *I never make them: they grow; they come to me and insist on being written, and on being such and such.* He did not want to write *Erewhon;* he wanted to paint pictures; but *Erewhon* insisted on being written with so great a force that he could not resist.[5] So he would conclude that, just as *a hen is only an egg's way of making another egg*,[6] an author is no more than a book's way of producing another book. A book is thus alive, it gives out force, it has the mysterious power of effecting mutations, and if it be objected that these changes are not corporeal, few will deny that an unseen current moves powerfully through a real book and

[1] *F. J. Furnivall, a Personal Record.* Monro. 91. [2] 'My Books', *Essays.* Camelot Ed. 301–2. [3] Shakespeare, *Sonnets.* xxx. [4] *Note Books.* 16. [5] *Ib.* 106. [6] *Life and Habit.* 134.

that this current is the man who wrote it, or, which is more to my purpose, the juice or essence of him. In this contention I find support in a writer[1] of our own day who gives out that the *De Rerum Natura* is *charged* with Lucretius, and *we are frequently brought into so sharp a contact with him that it resembles an electric shock*, to which effect I have said some things already, and I now add this comment from Anatole France for another return to the main, which will augment with evidence this hypothesis: masterpieces are *books of life*, he says, and when we read them *we make them pass into ourselves*.[2] George Moore brings the evidence of his own experience to bear favourably upon this idea, for, he frankly confesses, a book is nothing to him unless it contribute to the *exact diet* his mind requires at that time. He receives, digests, and casts it away. *I discarded my books when I had assimilated as much of them as my system required;* but forever afterwards something of them is *incarnate* within him.[3]

Charles Lamb argues that *with long poring*, George Dyer *is grown almost into a book*. He saw him in the library at Oriel College, Oxford, *busy as a moth over some rotten archive*, standing beside the old shelves as passive as a book, and *longed to new-coat him in Russia, and assign him his place*, where *he might have mustered for a tall 'Scapula';*[4] and Sydney Smith, as we know, saw Macaulay as *a book in breeches*.[5] Even women sometimes are subject to a like metamorphosis, as the heroine of Wright's *The Female Virtuosos* (1693), who was dubbed by Sir Maurice Meanwell *a walking University, a Library of Flesh*.

Books to bookmen are both food and cover; they live by the proxy of them, become books in mind if not in body, as that one, recorded by Hazlitt,[6] who believed implicitly in genius, truth, virtue, liberty, because he found the names of these things in books. *The legend of good women was to him no fiction;* life was like an *illuminated missal*, and *all the people but so many figures in a 'camera obscura'. He reads the world, like*

[1] Hope Mirrlees, *Life and Letters*. 563. Dec. 1928. [2] *On Life and Letters*. 2nd Series. Pref. Trans. Evans. xii. [3] *Confessions of a Young Man*. (1909.) 34–5. [4] 'Oxford in the Vacation', *Essays of Elia*. [5] *Memoir of Sydney Smith*. i, 363. [6] 'On the Conversation of Authors.'

a favourite volume, only to find beauties in it, or like an edition of some old work which he is preparing for the press, only to make emendations in it, and correct the errors that have inadvertently slipt in. Their influence, power of suggestion, hath been widely noted; in fear of it Montaigne abstained from books when writing *Essays. When I write,* he confessed,[1] *I can well omit the company, and spare the remembrance of books; for feare they interrupt my forme; good authors deject me too-too much,* they *quaile* his *courage;* he strove, therefore, to imitate the painter who, having *bungler-like* drawn some cocks, forbade his boys to suffer any live cocks to come into his shop. To give himself some lustre or grace he had *rather neede of some Antinonydes the Musician's invention;* but in the end books won, for he could hardly be without *Plutarch.* In him he found, as so many have, before and since, a master of insinuation, of book-power to turn men his ways: *he is so universall and so full, that upon all occasions, and whatsoever extravagant subject you have undertaken, he intrudeth himselfe into your work, and gently reacheth you a helpe-affording hand, fraught with rare embelishments, and inexhaustible of precious riches.* It *spights* him to note how much this excellent authority is so much exposed to the pillage of those which haunt him, but he himself is no better, no more immune, for no sooner does he so much as glance upon him but he pulls *some legge or wing from* him. The sum of all this being that, Montaigne knowing himself *of an Apish and imitating condition,* feared to be made into the books of others, for it was his wish, as he confessed, that *all the world may know me by my booke, and my booke by me.* His wish was fulfilled, for who knows his *Essays* knows him, who touches them touches him.

The bookman is a tree, another authority[2] gives out, *on which have been grafted Homer, Virgil, Milton, Dante, Petrarch; hence singular flowers which are not natural any more than they are artificial. With Homer, he has looked at the plain of Troy, and there lingers in his brain something of the light of the sky of Greece; he has taken something of the pensive beauty of Virgil as*

[1] 'Upon some Verses of Virgil', *Essays.* Ed. Seccombe. iii, 122–3.
[2] Doudan, *Lettres et Mélanges.*

he wanders on the Aventine slopes; he sees the world like Milton through the grey mists of England, like Dante through the limpid burning sky of Italy. And out of it all he makes for himself, as though he peered through multicoloured glasses, a new colour that is unique: *from all these glasses through which his life passes to reach the real world there is formed a particular tint*, which determines his imagination.

On that note I close this volume and affirm that bookmen, *men of letters*, students, and all manner of passionate readers are a species apart finding their sustenance in the printed word as plants imbibe air and fishes animalculæ; they do not look upon life with their own eyes, but through the eyes of books as through an optical glass, magnifying, intensifying, distorting or glorifying, according as they fancy it; or sometimes they eschew all common affairs and use books as kaleidoscopes to make for their own delight fantastic patterns which they use as substitutes for life. They become natives of a world of books, creatures of the printed word, and in the end cease to be men, as, by a gradual metastasis, they are resolved into bookmen: twice-born, first of woman (as every man) and then of books, and, by reason of this, unique and distinct from the rest.

END OF VOLUME I

SYNOPSIS OF VOLUME II

The Second Volume of *The Anatomy of Bibliomania* will be published during the month of May, 1931. It will contain those Parts which deal with Libraries and the Care of Books —Book Borrowers and Biblioclepts—The Binding of Books —Bibliophobia or the Fear of Books—The Misfortunes of Books—A Digression of Bookworms—Book Hunting— Bibliomania or Book Madness, its causes, symptoms, varieties and cures—Bibliophily or the Love of Books—the Author's Epilogue and Acknowledgements, and an Index to the two volumes.

Date Due

Demco 38-297

v.1
010 J12a
Jackson, Holbrook
The Anatomy of Bib-
liomania...

010 J12a
v.1

Hunt Library
Carnegie-Mellon University
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

DEMCO

3 8482 00219 5754

Carnegie Mellon Offsite Facility
A014325